THE MARVEL MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & SCIENCE-FICTION / JUNE 1982 / $2.50 - 1£ UK

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epic™ ILLUSTRATED

featuring:
MARADA
THE
SHE-WOLF
by Chris
Claremont
& John
Bolton

also:
WEIRDWORLD
and
ABRAXAS
& THE
EARTHMAN

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JUNE 1982 VOL. 1, NO. 12

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SYNOPSIS

Somewhere in the endless heavens, a cosmic game is being played, an eternal contest between the champions of Light and Darkness. The shifting of the various pieces across the great chessboard, their gains and losses, are reflected in the lives of those who dwell in Weirdworld, the strange and wondrous land beneath.

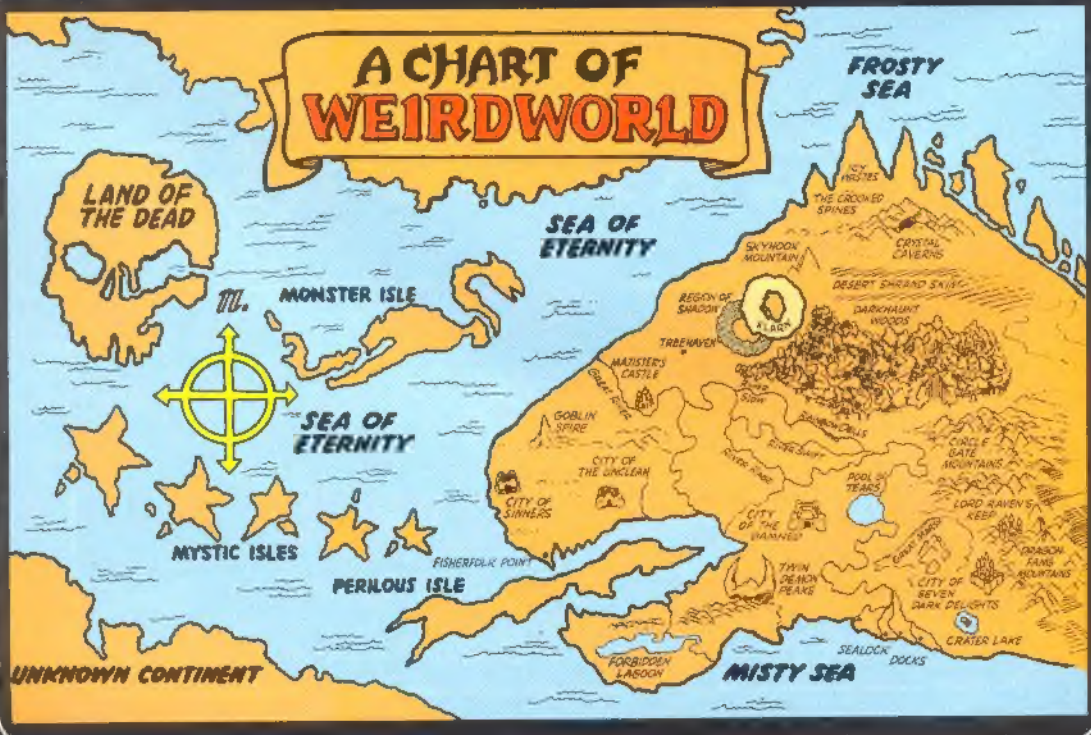
A few of those whose lives have been touched by the game of the gods are:

Tyndall and *Velanna*—a pair of innocent elves who long to return to their home, the floating island of Klarn, and who have no memory beyond the recent past.

Mud-Butt the dwarf—their loyal and irascible companion.

Black Majister and his henchman, *Murkandor*—a pair of evil sorcerers secretly working to gain control of Velanna, for they believe that she and Tyndall are somehow crucial to the fate of Weirdworld.

As the forces of Darkness have grown, numerous evils—dragon attacks, storms of stones, and hordes of marauding, cannibalistic goblins—have appeared throughout the land. Braving these dangers, as well as the disturbing change that is creeping over Velanna, Tyndall and his comrades journey to Skyhook Mountain to seek the aid of the wizard who dwells there. To their shock, they learn that the wizard is a woman, *Lianissa*, whose powers and life force have all but faded.



PART 3
THE DARK STRATAGEM
IN THE CLOUD-LEVEL CHAMBER WHERE DWELLS THE WIZARD OF SKYHOOK MOUNTAIN, SHE WHO IS THE PALE AND WEAKENED LIANISSA...
YOU... YOU ARE ONLY THREE... TWO ELVES AND A DWARF? WULFBUCK IS NOT WITH YOU?
WHO'S WULFBUCK?
I THOUGHT NOT... IT WAS ONLY A HOPE BEYOND ALL HOPE WHICH CAUSED ME TO ASK...
WHEN LAST I SAW WULFBUCK, HIS SPIRIT WAS... CRIPPLED... SHATTERED BY THE DESTRUCTION OF GLORYWAND...
LISTEN, LADY, KNOCK OFF ALL THE DOUBLETALK, WILLYA? MY FRIENDS HERE ARE TYNDALL AND VELANNA. ME, I'M MUD-BUTT.
...AND I ALWAYS HEARD THAT THE WIZARD OF SKYHOOK MOUNTAIN WAS S'POSED TO BE A BIG DEAL--HOT KREEBLES, YA KNOW?
SO WHEN ALL THIS BIG EVIL STARTED COMIN' DOWN ON THE LAND, I FIGURED YOU'D BE THE ONE WHO COULD STOP IT.
LIANISSA SIGHS, AND SOMETHING DARK AND HEAVY SLIDES ACROSS HER EYES. WHEN SHE SPEAKS, IT IS TOO SOFTLY: "THEN YOU WERE WRONG, LITTLE ONE."

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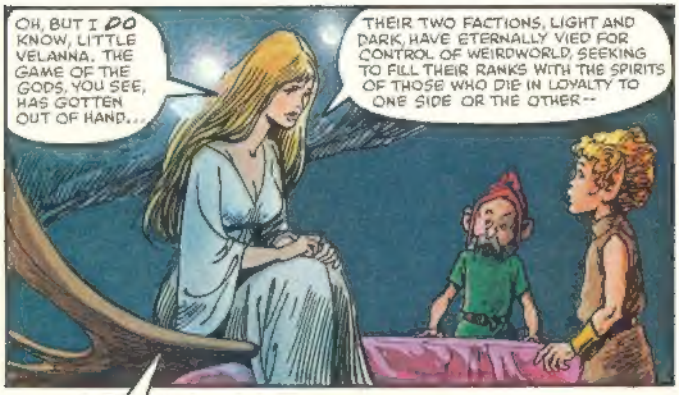
YET CURIOUSLY, HER CONFESSION OF WEAKNESS SEEMS TO REKINDLE THE EMBERS OF STRENGTH...
EVEN BEFORE THE DARK ONE WEAKENED ME, I HAD CONFERRED MUCH OF MY POWER UPON WULFBUCK. ONLY HE -- AND GLORYWAND -- MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE...
BUT NOW EVEN WULFBUCK'S RESOLVE HAS BEEN SHATTERED BY THE EVIL...AND, I FEAR, WEIRDWORLD MUST FINALLY FALL...

WHAT IS THE EVIL, LIANISSA? WHAT'S HAPPENING TO WEIRDWORLD?
CLOSE YOUR MOUTH, TYNDALL -- SHE'S NOT THAT BEAUTIFUL, SHE'S JUST BIG.
BESIDES, WHAT MAKES YOU THINK SHE KNOWS ANYTHING?


OH, BUT I DO KNOW, LITTLE VELANNA. THE GAME OF THE GODS, YOU SEE, HAS GOTTEN OUT OF HAND...
THEIR TWO FACTIONS, LIGHT AND DARK, HAVE ETERNALLY VIED FOR CONTROL OF WEIRDWORLD, SEEKING TO FILL THEIR RANKS WITH THE SPIRITS OF THOSE WHO DIE IN LOYALTY TO ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER --

"TO THEM, IT IS A MERE GAME, A TRIFLING AMUSEMENT WITH WHICH TO PASS THE BOREDOM OF INFINITY AND ETERNITY...

-- AND WHO CONSEQUENTLY BECOME GODS OF LIGHT OR DARKNESS THEMSELVES.
A MORTAL'S CONDUCT WHILE LIVING DETERMINES WHICH FACTION OF THE GODS HE WILL JOIN AFTER DEATH...
"THUS, THEY TOY WITH US, USING US AS PAWNS, DARK AGAINST LIGHT, DAY AGAINST NIGHT."

"BUT TO US DOWN HERE ON WEIRDWORLD, IT IS THE HELLISH STRIFE KNOWN SIMPLY AS WAR.
"YET WE KNOW IT BY ANOTHER NAME, TOO...
"LIFE."

AND YOU, UH, YOU'RE A PAWN FOR THE SAME SIDE AS US--THE LIGHT SIDE...THE GOOD SIDE?
THE GODS ARE ABOVE SUCH PETTY NOTIONS AS GOOD AND EVIL, LITTLE TYNDALL, AND WE DOWN HERE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT NEITHER SIDE WINS THE GAME...
...FOR ONLY IN BALANCE--ONLY IN ETERNAL STALEMATE CAN WEIRDWORLD BE PRESERVED.

SHOULD ONE FACTION TAKE THE ADVANTAGE AND SEIZE DOMINION, THE GAME OF LIFE WILL END.
U-ULP... E-EVEN IF IT'S THE SIDE OF LIGHT THAT WINS?
I TOLD YOU--THE ONLY WAY FOR US TO WIN IS NOT TO WIN...AND NOT TO LOSE.

"IF THE INFLUENCE OF EITHER SIDE TAKES ROOT IN THE SOULS OF A MAJORITY DWELLING HERE ON WEIRDWORLD...
"...THEN, WHEN WE DIE AND OUR SOULS JOURNEY TO THE UNKNOWN CONTINENT, THE LAND OF THE DEAD, THERE TO AWAIT COLLECTION BY THE JET OR SILVER CHARIOT...

"...INDEED, WHEN THOSE SOULS ARE BORNE TO THE HEAVENS, AND JOIN THE RANKS OF THE GODS...
"...THEN, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ALL OF FOREVER, ONE FACTION WILL OUTNUMBER THE OTHER, AND THAT FACTION WILL IMMEDIATELY SENSE VICTORY IN AGGRESSION...
"...AND *THEN* SHALL COMMENCE A FULL-SCALE *WAR OF THE GODS.*"

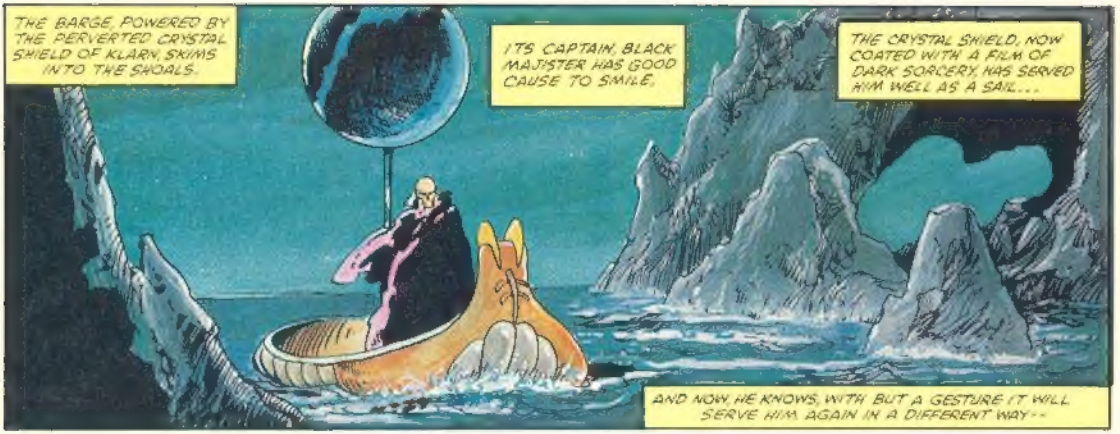
SHEESH! AND THEN WHO'LL TAKE CARE OF THE *UNIVERSE?* WHO'LL PRESIDE OVER THE AFFAIRS OF NATURE AND HARMONY ON THIS PITIFUL WORLD OF OURS?
WHAT'LL *BECOME* OF US?!
PRECISELY, LITTLE ONE. WHAT *INDEED?*

RISEN NOW, AND PACING, LIANISSA SEEMS FAR LESS WEAK, THOUGH NO LESS DEFEATED...
THE ONLY HOPE IS TO SHAKE WULFBUCK OUT OF HIS DESPAIR AND-- BUT NO, WITHOUT GLORYWAND, EVEN *THAT* WOULD NOT HELP...
I DUNNO WHO THIS "WULFBUCK" CHARACTER IS, BUT IF MY POWER-ROD WASN'T BUSTED, I'D--
HM? POWER-ROD?

WHAT?! THE *HILT!* THEN THERE *IS* HOPE!
YOU MUST SHOW IT TO *WULFBUCK*-- AND PERHAPS, JUST PERHAPS, IT WILL GIVE HIM ENOUGH STRENGTH TO *OVERCOME* HIMSELF!

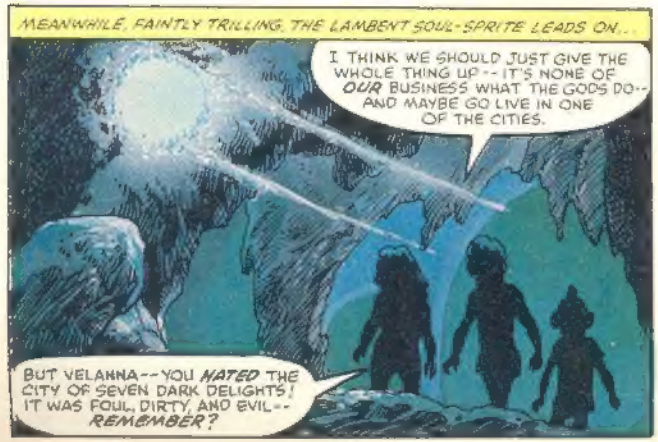
I... I'M CONFUSED, LIANISSA. JUST WHO *IS* THIS WULFBUCK?
HOW DO WE *FIND* HIM--?

AND HOW DO WE EVEN GET OUT OF HERE WITH THAT GOBLIN HORDE SURROUNDING THE MOUNTAIN--?
MAJISTER GIVE US GOOD JOB-NOT-WORK.
SOON WE COOK FLESH-FOR-EATING.
YOU WILL TAKE THIS TUNNEL, LITTLE TYNDALL, WHICH OPENS FAR BEYOND THE LINE OF THE GOBLIN SIEGE.
GO NOW! MY SOUL-SPRITE WILL LEAD THE WAY!
SEEING THE DOORWAY, HOPE FILLS TYNDALL AND MUD-BUTT...
...BUT VELANNA'S EYES ARE ICE..
AND QUICKLY--SHOW THE HILT TO WULFBUCK--BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE, EVEN FOR THE MIGHT OF GLORYWAND!
SHE...SHE MEANT IT, MUD-BUTT! THE BALL OF LIGHT IS LEADING THE WAY--LIGHTING THE TUNNEL AHEAD!
YEAH, TWIT, AND LET'S HOPE SHE MEANT IT ABOUT THIS TUNNEL COMIN' UP BEYOND THE GOBLINS. NOW THAT MY POWER-ROD'S BUSTED, I AIN'T EXACTLY CRAZY TO SEE THEM AGAIN.
I FEAR THE FEMALE ELF SOUL-SPRITES, THE ONE WHOSE EYES WERE COLD.
IF SHE HAS ALREADY BEEN TAINTED BY THE DARK-NESS--
--SHE MAY WELL SPOIL THE ONLY CHANCE THEY HAVE.
AT THAT MOMENT, FAR ACROSS THE GLITTERING SEA OF ETERNITY, A SORCEROUS BARGE AP-PROACHES THE UNKNOWN CONTINENT KNOWN AS THE LAND OF THE DEAD...


THE BARGE, POWERED BY THE PERVERTED CRYSTAL SHIELD OF KLARN, SKIMS INTO THE SHOALS.
ITS CAPTAIN, BLACK MAJISTER HAS GOOD CAUSE TO SMILE.
THE CRYSTAL SHIELD, NOW COATED WITH A FILM OF DARK SORCERY, HAS SERVED HIM WELL AS A SAIL...
AND NOW HE KNOWS, WITH BUT A GESTURE IT WILL SERVE HIM AGAIN IN A DIFFERENT WAY--

--REACHING BACK TO HIS HAUNT ACROSS THE SEA, LINKING HIM WITH HIS BRUTISH SERVANT...
AH, MURKANDOR, I SEE THE FILLING OF THE STATUE GOES WELL...
YES, LORD MAJISTER, THE HOLLOW GLASS IS NEARLY FULL--

--AND SOON ITS COUNTERPART IN FLESH--THE FEMALE ELF, VELANNA--WILL OBEY ANY COMMAND WE ISSUE.
EXCELLENT, MURKANDOR--FOR SHE WILL BE NEEDED SOON. BUT FOR NOW, I MUST YET REACH THE LAND OF THE DEAD AND SERVE THE DARK GODS THROUGH MY FINAL STRATAGEM...
ONLY THEN, MURKANDOR, WILL THE ECSTASY OF ETERNAL NIGHT BE OURS.


MEANWHILE, FAINTLY TRILLING, THE LAMBENT SOUL-SPRITE LEADS ON...
I THINK WE SHOULD JUST GIVE THE WHOLE THING UP--IT'S NONE OF *OUR* BUSINESS WHAT THE GODS DO--AND MAYBE GO LIVE IN ONE OF THE CITIES.
BUT VELANNA--YOU *HATED* THE CITY OF SEVEN DARK DELIGHTS! IT WAS FOUL, DIRTY, AND EVIL--*REMEMBER?*

BESIDES, NOW THAT WE'RE INVOLVED, WE CAN'T JUST GIVE UP...
HMP. I SEE THAT THE SOPHISTICATED LURE OF CITIES IS MORE THAN *YOU'LL* EVER UNDERSTAND. DON'T YOU KNOW DECADENCE ADDS *SPICE* TO LIFE?
BUT--

GIVE IT UP, TWIT-- SHE AIN'T BUYIN' YOUR BRAND OF TALK THESE DAYS.
AND IN CASE YA AIN'T NOTICED, LIANISSA'S CRAZY LIGHT-BALL JUST BROUGHT US TO THE END OF THE LINE.
BRRR... SPOOKY HERE. WHERE ARE WE?
MY GUESS'D BE DARKHAUNT WOODS, THOUGH I DON'T SEE HOW. THE TUNNEL WASN'T THAT LONG...
IT WAS...AND IT WASN'T. BUT NOW IT IS TIME TO MEET WULFBUCK.
WHAT THE--?! THE CRAZY LIGHT TALKED!
LOOK OUT! IT'S EXPLODING!!
AND WHEN THE DAZZLE LEAVES THEIR EYES...
SHEESH! NOW WE'RE IN SOME GREASY TAVERN SOMEWHERE! YEAH...BY THE LOOKS OF THE FOLKS IN HERE, THIS IS DARKHAUNT ALL RIGHT...
THE SOUL-SPRITE HOVERS OVER A MYSTERIOUS FIGURE HUNCHED OVER HIS MUG-- A COWLED DERELICT SWIMMING IN A SEA OF DRINK AND DESPAIR..
THIS IS WULFBUCK.
WULFBUCK--?! HIM?!

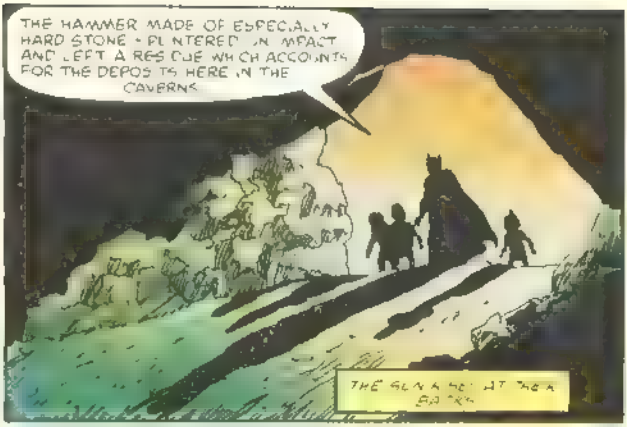
LISTEN IF YOU'RE REALLY A WOLFBLOOD THEN YOU'VE GOT TO HELP. THE WORLD IS THREATENED BY
THE BLACK MAJISTER HE CALLS HIMSELF NOW
AND IT WAS HE WHO DID THIS TO ME - TURNED ME INTO A BEAST
YOU. YOU REALLY ARE LIKE A WOLF. BUT H HOW D-DID IT. HAPPEN ?
HOW? BECAUSE I DARED DO WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE ME DO AGAIN
WHATEVER HER MOTIVES SHE MADE A GREAT SACRIFICE IN MY CAUSE GIVING ME THE GLORYWAND AND FILLING IT WITH MUCH OF HER OWN SORCEROUS POWER HER OWN ESSENCE OF GLORY
I DARED THE FOLLY OF OPPOSING BLACK MAJESTER BUT I WAS NOT ALWAYS LIKE THIS I BECAME A MONSTER ONLY AFTER I BECAME A HERO TO WIN THE LOVE OF FARANGSA
SHE ACCEPTED MY LOVE PERHAPS BECAUSE I WAS STILL HANDSOME OF FACE THEN OR PERHAPS ONLY BECAUSE SHE NEEDED SOMEONE TO OPPOSE MAJESTER
THE ACT DEPLETED HER STRENGTH YET ALSO SEEMED TO PLEASE HER SPIRIT IN SOME UNKNOWN INNER WAY
HER FAREWELL WAS WORDLESS
SHE SIMPLY TOUCHED MY FACE TENDERLY
FOR THE FIRST AND LAST TIME

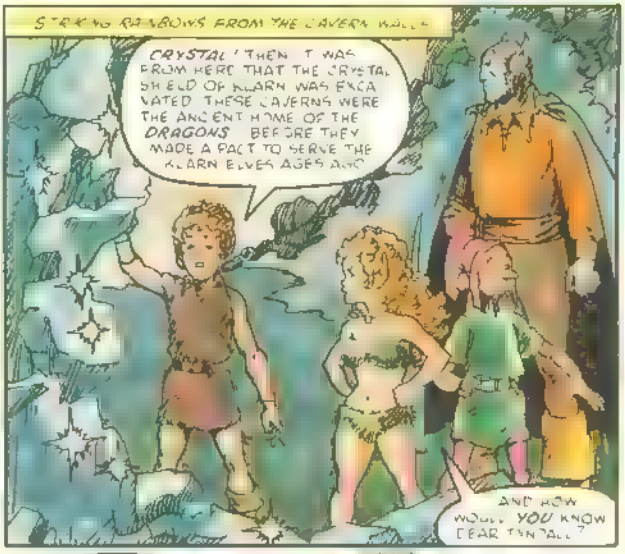
AND I LIKE A FOOL DRUNK WITHOUT DRINK--DRUNK ON LOVE--SALLIED FORTH TO DEFEAT THE EVIL BLACK MAJISTER.
"...AND WAS MYSELF IGNOMINIOUSLY DEFEATED IN THE BRIEFEST BATTLE EVER FOUGHT BETWEEN HERO AND VILLAIN.
PRECIOUS GLORYWAND WAS SHATTERED--SUNDERED BLADE FROM HILT
"AND SO TOO WAS I SHATTERED--FOR IT WAS THEN THAT MAJISTER TOUCHED MY FACE.
TOUCHED IT NOT TENDERLY BUT CRUELLY WITH HIS FOUL SORCERY..."
LEAVING IT FOREVER LIKE THIS
AND NOW YOU WANT ME TO DO IT AGAIN--WITHOUT EVEN THE SUPPORT OF GLORYWAND IN MY SHAKING HAND. MAJISTER SEALED THE BLADE IN THE CRYSTAL CAVERNS. GAVE THE HILT TO A BROTHER SORCERER LORD RAVEN
AND I SWIPED IT FROM RAVEN--SEE?!
SO YOU HAVE--KEEP IT IN HEALTH. EVEN IF WE COULD AGAIN FIX IT TO THE BLADE--EVEN IF WE COULD DEFEAT MAJISTER--WHAT IS THE POINT WHEN I CAN NEVER AGAIN FACE LIANISSA?
BUT YOU CAN FACE ME WULFBUCK AND MY TOUCH WILL BE JUST AS TENDER
IT WAS BY YOUR DEEDS THAT YOU GAINED MY LOVE NOT BY YOUR MASK OR MEN
YOU FAILED THE FIRST TIME BECAUSE YOU DID NOT TRULY BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF MY LOVE...OR IN THE POWER OF GLORYWAND FOR THE TWO ARE ONE.
LIANISSA HOW COULD I BELIEVE THAT SOMEONE SUCH AS YOU WITH POWERS TRANSCENDING OTHER MORTALS, COULD LOVE ME...?
BELIEVE IT NOW WULFBUCK I SHALL LOVE YOU WITH MY DYING THOUGHT
AND IF YOU LOVE ME TRULY THEN GO TO THE CRYSTAL CAVERNS

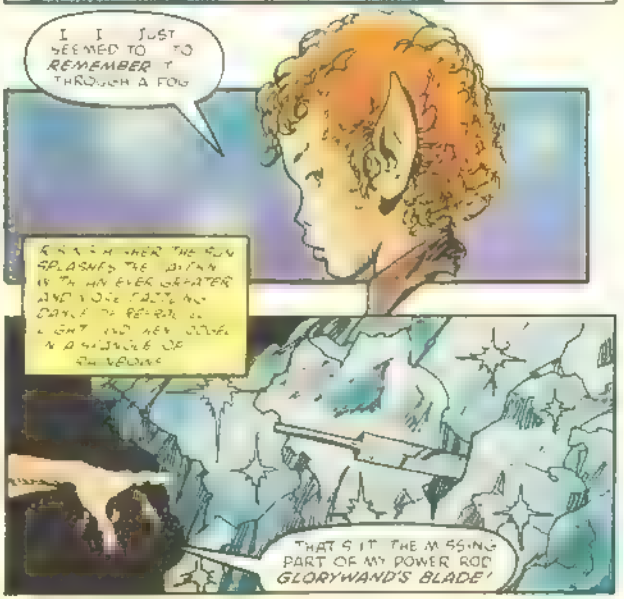
AND THOSE TOUCHED BY THE CRIMSON
AGH-H!
- SWIFTLY STIFFEN AND DROP DEAD
WHAT NO ONE DISTURBS SHREEKAR'S PLEASURE WITH FLESH? WHO DARES -
WHAT..? A STRANGE MIST RED-SO RED!
YOUR GUARDS ARE NOW MINE, SHREEKAR
MY GUARDS THE MIST STEALS THEIR BREATH FOR DYING
WHO ?!
THE RED MIST IS THE BREATH OF HELL THE BREATH WHICH KILLS
YOU-! BLACK MAJISTER--!!
SHREEKAR WHAT DREAM SO-BAD ?

NO DREAM PLEASURE FLESH THE MIST SORED COMES FOR US- CLOSER AND CLOSER!
MUST SEAL TENT'S FLAP FOR-CLOSING--
YOU CAN NE'THER HIDE NOR ESCAPE FROM THE MIST SHREEKAR!
YOU HAVE FAILED YOUR CHARGE HERE GOBLIN! YOU HAVE ALLOWED THE ELVES TO REACH THE WIZARD OF SKYHOOK MOUNTAIN - AND SO YOU MUST MOVE ON
ON TO THE LAND OF THE DEAD WHERE I HAVE FURTHER USE FOR YOU!
F IN LIFE YOU HAVE FAILED ME THEN I MUST TAKE THAT LIFE-- SO THAT IN DEATH YOU WILL SERVE ME MORE TRULY
THE SEPULCHRAL VOICE ECHOES THROUGH THE TENT
AS THE APPARITION OF MAGISTER DISSOLVES
INTO A FINE WET RED MIST
AGH-H-H!
NO!
NO--!
NOOOOOOO

SO THESE ARE THE CROOKED SPINE MOUNTAINS
AYE TYNDALL SAID TO BE THE WORLD'S MOST MAJESTIC RANGE -- AND THE VERY BACKBONE OF THE GIANT OF WEIRDWORLD WHO SLUMBERS FACE-DOWN IN HIS MASSIVE GRAVE
SURELY WULFRUCK A WORLDLY MAN SUCH AS YOU DOESN'T REALLY BELIEVE THAT?
WHO CAN SAY, YELANNA? THE MOUNTAINS DO INDEED FORM A STRAIGHT SPINE SAVE FOR THE ONE POINT WHERE THE CRYSTAL CAVERNS ARE LOCATED
PERHAPS NOTHING MUCH BUTT BUT THE LEGENDS CLAIM THAT THE GIANT'S BACK WAS BROKEN BY A HAMMER COME DOWN FROM
PROVING WHAT WULFIE?


THE HAMMER MADE OF ESPECIALLY HARD STONE - PLUNTERED ON IMPACT AND LEFT A RESCUE WHICH ACCOUNTS FOR THE DEPOSITS HERE IN THE CAVERNS


STRIKING RAINBOWS FROM THE CAVERN WALLS
CRYSTAL! THEN IT WAS FROM HERE THAT THE CRYSTAL SHIELD OF KLARN WAS EXCAVATED. THESE CAVERNS WERE THE ANCIENT HOME OF THE DRAGONS BEFORE THEY MADE A PACT TO SERVE THE KLARN ELVES AGES AGO
AND HOW WOULD YOU KNOW DEAR TYNDALL?


I... I JUST SEEMED TO... TO REMEMBER IT THROUGH A FOG
AS I WATCHED THE SUN SPLASHES THE DAWN IS TH AN EVER GREATER AND I FELT MY POWER GROW TO PEAK OF LIGHT AND HER SOUL A RADIANCE OF GLORY
THAT'S IT! THE MISSING PART OF MY POWER ROD GLORYWAND'S BLADE!

QUIETLY AWED STRANGELY SOMBER MUD-BUTT DRAWS HIS POWER AND FOR THE LAST TIME AND SURRENDERS IT TO WULFBLOCK
HERE'S THE HILT WULFIE.
DO YER STUFF
YES THEY WILL FIT AFTER SO LONG SO MANY YEARS OF SELF PITY AND SEPARATION FROM FAIR LIANSSA HILT AND BLADE WILL MATE LIKE LOVERS
AND THEY SEEM TO LEAP TOGETHER WITH A CLICK AND SNAP LOOKING IN PLACE FOREVER AS ONE NEVER TO BE SUNDERED AGAIN
BY THEN TOR AN HE MIGHT-
"NGH! IT'S LODGED TOO FIRMLY I CAN'T PULL IT OUT
SO THE BIG HERO ISN'T SO BIG AFTER ALL MAYBE YOU'RE STILL DRUNK, WULFBUCK?
QUIET, LANNA HE'S TRYING
AYE WITH ALL MY MIGHT BUT IT SIMPLY REFUSES TO LEAVE THE CRYSTAL
IT'S USELESS I HAVE NOT THE STRENGTH
WAIT--LISTEN THAT SOUND- LIKE FLAPPING!
TH THE KLARN DRAGON RED SORYLL I TOLD YOU
NO- DON'T WORRY HE MEANS US NO HARM

BUT A DRAGON TYNDALL
HE'S HERE TO HELP GRAB GLORYWANDS NOT WOLFBUCK MUD BUTT WE GONNA STAND BACK
HEN OF TYNDALL AGAIN WEAKENS AT A STRANGE SPELL SOON NO LONGER SUPERHUMAN
RED SORYLL BREATHES
THE CRYSTAL IS MELTING UNDER THE FLAME
BY THE DWARF MOTHER'S HAIRY
GLORYWAND IS FREE!!
AND TYNDALL'S TRANCE DEEPENS
ILLANOR HEPHEET JH ILLANOR
OH OH THE TWINS ONE WE'RE AGAIN SNAKEN THEY'RE AND WE'RE THE LEFT BACK AT TREEHAVEN
I I HAVE COMMUNED WITH SORYLL THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF ILLANOR
HE WHO FIRST BOUND ANCIENT ELF TO ANCIENT DRAGON - AND SORYLL CLAIMS THAT I AM DESCENDED FROM ILLANOR THAT I AM THE LAST OF AN ANCIENT BLOODLINE THE LAST OF THE DRAGON MASTERS OF KLARN!
THAT'S GREAT TWIT BUT WE STILL GOT A PROBLEM HERE
WE GOTTA STOP MAJISTER BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE! IS YOUR FRIEND OUT THERE GONNA LET US PAST--?
BETTER THAN THAT MUD-BUTT AFTER I FIRST COMMUNED WITH ILLANOR AT TREEHAVEN HE LED THE OTHER DRAGONS IN SEARCH OF THE CRYSTAL SHIELD OF KLARN WHICH HAD KEPT THEM SLUMBERING IN PEACE FOR EONS
THEY FOUND IT IN THE POSSESSION OF BLACK MAJISTER USING IT TO POWER A PASSAGE ACROSS THE SEA
ACROSS THE SEA HOW ARE WE GONNA FOLLOW HIM THERE..?!
EASY MUD BUTT
WE'RE GOING TO FLY

NEXT CONFIGURATIONS OF CRYSTAL

PARMENIDES: LET THIS MUCH BE SAID; AND FURTHER LET US AFFIRM WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE TRUTH, THAT, WHETHER ONE IS OR IS NOT, ONE AND THE OTHERS IN RELATION TO THEMSELVES AND ONE ANOTHER ALL OF THEM, IN EVERY WAY, ARE AND ARE NOT, AND APPEAR TO BE AND APPEAR NOT TO BE.

ARISTOTELES: MOST TRUE.

SMALL GIFTS

EXACTLY FIVE YEARS LATER THE FRONT DOOR OPENED. DOWNSTAIRS AND OUTSIDE NIGHT WAS BEGINNING TO SLIP INTO DAY

SHE COULD HARDLY FEEL THE COOL SHADOWS AS SHE RAN THROUGH FIELDS AND AUTUMN.

INTO THICKET.

INTO WOODS

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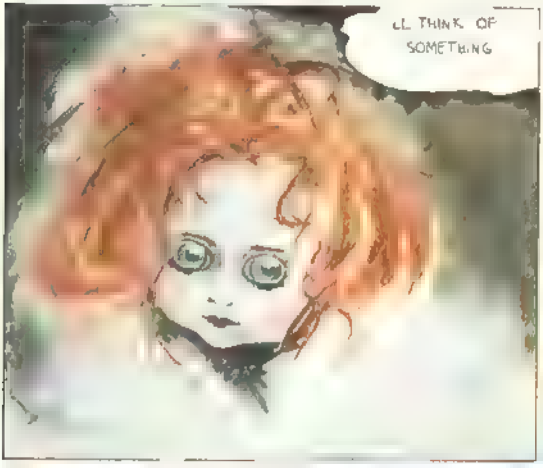
GEORGE! GEORGE!
I CAME BACK!
HELLO
BOBBIE'S SICK
CAN YOU HELP?
ANNA!
HELLO.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
HER HEART IS
BROKEN
AND JUST WHY S HER
HEART BROKEN, DO YOU
SUPPOSE?
CAUSE

CAUSE.

BECAUSE? BECAUSE WHY?
BECAUSE OF HER PARENTS THEY MISS HER AND SHE'S SAD.
PARENTS?!
I COULD GIVE THEM A PRESENT.
SOMETHING SMALL BUT NOT TOO SMALL
SOMETHING BIG?
BUT NOT TOO BIG
I WISH THEY HAD WINGS



AND AT THE VERY SAME MOMENT THAT THE FRONT DOOR OPENED WITH THE MORNING WIND THE PARENTS WOKE

CHILLED A LITTLE BIT.

NOT REMINDED BUT NEVER FORGETTING THAT THIS WAS THE SAME DAY THEY LOST THEIR LITTLE ANNA. FIVE YEARS AGO SHE WAS SEVEN

THE WINDOWS NOW SHOWED A FRAIL DAWN.

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SOME TIMES

OBSTACLES

SEEM TO BE

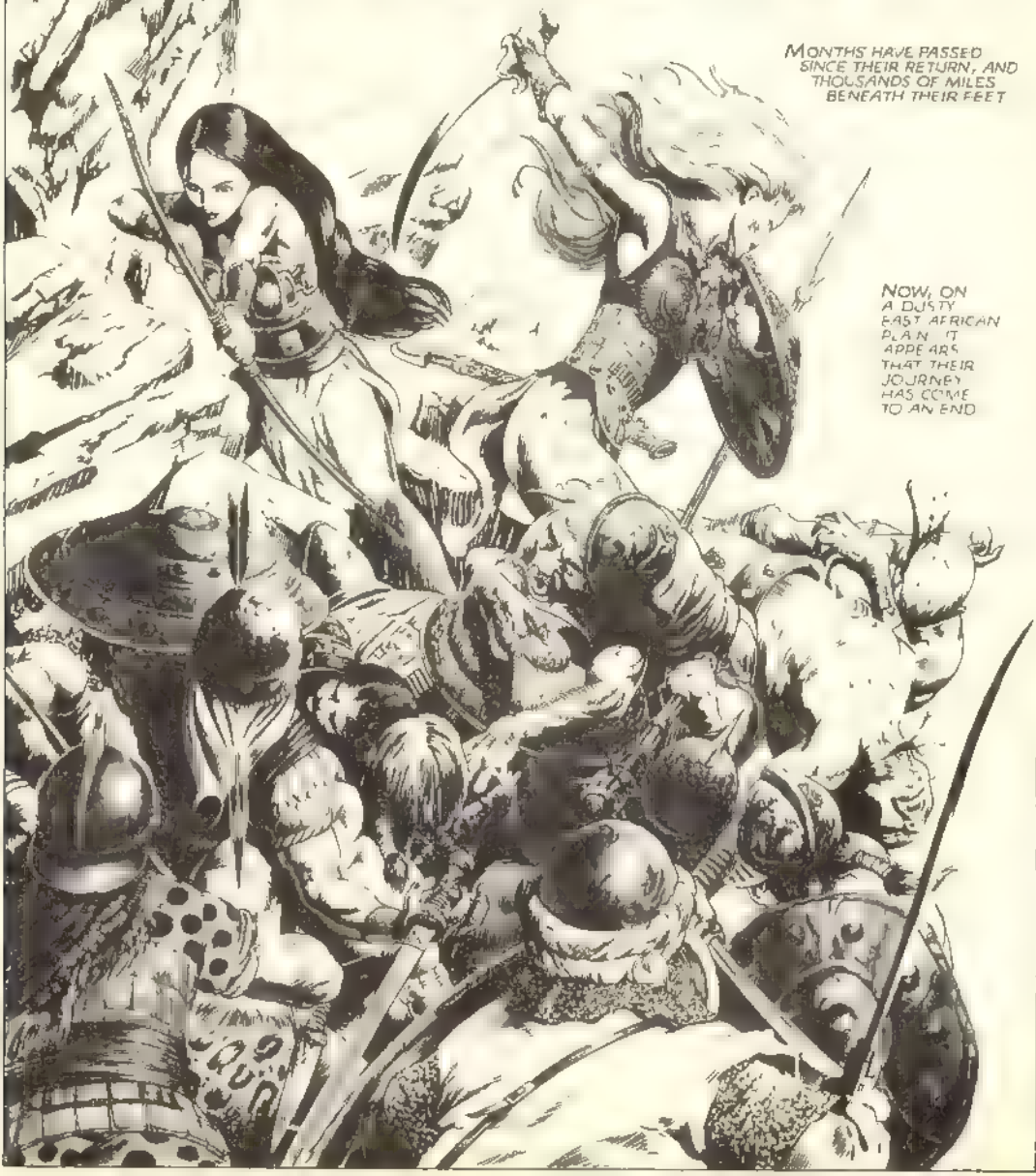
INSURMOUNTABLE .

WE STRUGGLE WITH
WHAT SEEMS RIGHT.
EXIT
WHO CAN ESCAPE WHAT HE DESIRES ?

They are legend these two the tall lean warrior woman **Marada Starhair** called the **She-Wolf** and her young protegee — **Ariannhod**, child-sorceress of the fabled magical fortress **Ashandriar.**

When Ari was kidnapped by the demon lord **Y'Garon** Marada followed and rescued her killing the demon in the process. Ari attempted a spell of teleportation to return them to Ashandriar, but the child's inexperience proved their undoing, for they landed in southern Africa, half a world away

ROYAL HUNT


MONTHS HAVE PASSED SINCE THEIR RETURN, AND THOUSANDS OF MILES BENEATH THEIR FEET
NOW, ON A DUSTY EAST AFRICAN PLAIN IT APPEARS THAT THEIR JOURNEY HAS COME TO AN END

story © 1982 Christopher Claremont art © 1982 John Bolton

MARADA, THIS IS MY LAST ARROW!
IF YOU'VE A MIND TO TRY THAT DAMN SPELL OF TRANSPORTATION AGAIN, ARI, I WON'T OBJECT
OUR FOES DON'T SEEM INTERESTED IN TAKING PRISONERS AND IF THEY MAKE AN EXCEPTION IN OUR CASE IT'LL BE TO SELL US INTO SLAVERY--OR WORSE
I'LL TRY - BUT IT REQUIRES TOTAL CONCENTRATION I CAN'T CAST IT AND FIGHT
GET BEHIND ME, THEN I'LL DO MY BEST TO BUY THE TIME YOU NEED
DAYS AGO, A MERCENARY CAPTAIN HAD RECOGNIZED MARADA AND WELL AWARE OF HER FORMIDABLE REPUTATION HAD MADE A SIMPLE OFFER JOIN HIS COMMAND OR DIE AT THE TIME MARADA WONDERED WHAT SO LARGE A FORCE WAS DOING IN THIS REMOTE PART OF THE WORLD
LATER AS THEY STRUCK DEEP INTO THE RENOWNED BLACK EMPIRE OF MEROE, SHE LEARNED THAT THEY WERE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF A REBELLION PART OF AN ARMY OF FREEBOOTERS HIRED TO SEIZE THE THRONE OF MEROE'S RULER--THE CANDANCE, ASHAKE.
THIS MORNING, ASHAKE'S ARMY AMBUSHED THE INVADERS THE BLOODY, NO QUARTER BATTLE HAS RAGED THROUGH MOST OF THE DAY
AT DUSK, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE REBELLION IS A LOST CAUSE

AND BEFORE ARI CAN EVEN BEGIN HER ENCHANTMENT
GOT YOU!
AARI !!
MARADA'S CUB IS DOWN! STRIKE BROTHERS AND THE SHE WOLF IS OU - RRRGH!
SLAYER OF CHILDREN! THEY'LL COME TOO LATE TO SAVE YOUR MAGGOT-RIDDEN CARCAS.'
ARI!!
BRIGHT LADY BE PRAISED THE WOUND IS UGLY -
BUT AT LEAST SHE STILL BREATHES -
--UNNNGNH!
SHAME ON YOU, MARADA, DROPPING YOUR GUARD LIKE THAT THE SHE WOLF I REMEMBER WOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER
THE BATTLE'S OVER COMRADES WHAT SAY WE CELEBRATE OUR VICTORY AS WARRIORS SHOULD?
STAND YOUR GROUND, CAPTAIN KEOS. LAY A HAND ON THE SILVER HAIRED WOMAN OR THE GIRL AND YOU'LL LOSE IT!
THIS IS MY REALM, KEOS MY ARMY MY WAR. MY SPOILS TO DISPOSE OF AS I WILL ARE YOU PREPARED TO ARGUE THE POINT?
THE CANDANCE! MAJESTY, THEY'RE RIGHTFUL SPOILS OF WAR
AGAINST YOUR HOUSE HOLD CAVALRY, THE SACRED SPEARS - NO TAKE THEM BOTH -
--AND BE DAMNED!

LATER
Uhhhmmm
WHAT A DELIGHTFUL SURPRISE I STILL LIVE
BUT HAVE I LOST MY MIND? THIS IS NO DUNGEON, BUT A ROYAL BED-CHAMBER.
I FEEL MUZZY, UNFOCUSED IT TAKES AN EFFORT TO THINK, TO MOVE. MY BODY FEELS SLUGGISH AND ACHEY THERE'S NO STRENGTH IN MY MUSCLES
DON'T BE ALARMED, MARADA YOU'VE BEEN DRUGGED
ARI! YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!
DRUGGED YOU SAY?
THE CANDANCE'S PHYSICIANS DID IT TO EASE YOUR PAIN YOU WERE HURT WORSE THAN YOU- OR ANY OF US - REALISED
WE'RE IN THE CANDANCE'S PALACE--HONORED PRISONERS THE OTHER SURVIVORS ON OUR SIDE WERE EXECUTED. I DON'T KNOW WHY AN EXCEPTION WAS MADE WITH US. YOU'VE BEEN UNCONSCIOUS FOR DAYS
ARI, YOUR FACE! YOU WERE CUT ACROSS THE FOREHEAD, YET THERE'S NO SCAR!
I'M A HEALER REMEMBER?
I CAN DO THE SAME FOR YOU MARADA IF YOU'LL LET ME I WAS AFRAID TO TRY WHILE YOU WERE COMATOSE BECAUSE I THOUGHT THE STRAIN MIGHT KILL YOU. I'M STILL SCARED OF THAT
I TRUST YOU, ARIANRHOD DO WITH ME WHAT YOU WILL
BLENDING FIRST WITH MARADA, AND THEN WITH ARCANE FORCES AND POWERS THAT HAVE BEEN A PART OF THE EARTH SINCE ITS CREATION

A LANGUID WARMTH SUFFUSES MARADA'S BODY
THEN SUDDENLY SHE BURNS! HER BLOOD TURNS TO MOLTEN FIRE THUNDERING THROUGH A BODY CAST OF WHITE HOT STEEL SHE FEELS HERSELF MELT AND REFORM--AS WHAT WAS DAMAGED IS MENDED, WHAT WAS WOUNDED, HEALED
SHE HAS NEVER EXPERIENCED SUCH AGONY A SCREAM IS TORN FROM HER SOUL, BUT IT IS NEVER HEARD SHE CANNOT DRAW BREATH ENOUGH TO UTTER IT
BUT WHEN SHE THINKS SHE CAN BEAR NO MORE, HER TORMENT ENDS AS ABRUPTLY AS IT BEGAN
AAAHHHHNNNN
ARI, CHILD, WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME?
M MARADA?
Oh, MARADA FORGIVE ME I I HURT YOU!
DON'T CRY POPPET DON'T BE SORRY THERE'S NO NEED
I FEEL GOOD
BETTER THAN I'VE FELT IN AGES ALMOST REBORN
I GOT A BIT CARRIED AWAY I HEALED NOT ONLY THE INJURIES YOU SUFFERED IN THE BATTLE BUT ALL YOUR OTHER, OLDER ONES AS WELL
EVEN MY SCARS ARE GONE I AM IMPRESSED
YOU CAN HEAL YOU CAN MOVE US BETWEEN WORLDS. Y'GARON CALLED YOU A "GODDESS-CHILD." ARE YOU?
A GODDESS I DON'T THINK SO

MY PEOPLE ARE OLD, AND BOUND TO THE EARTH WE LIVE IN HARMONY WITH ITS ESSENTIAL LIFE FORCE AND, FROM IT, WE DERIVE SPECIAL POWERS AND ABILITIES
MY GIFT IS HEALING BUT IN ADDITION, I CAN TELEPORT AND CAST ILLUSIONS I HAVE LIMITED INFLUENCE OVER THE NATURAL ELEMENTS EARTH, AIR, FIRE AND WATER.
THAT MAY SEEM IMPRESSIVE TO YOU BUT I'M REALLY ONLY A NOVICE MY GRANDMOTHER RHIANNON IS A TRUE SORCERESS!
I'LL REMEMBER THAT HUSH NOW CHILD- COMPANY
YOU ARE AWAKE OUTLANDER- THAT IS GOOD I AM MAKEDE, PHYSICIAN TO THE CANDANCE
THIS IS NTSHONGE, HER CHAMBERLAIN
AT THE CANDANCE'S COMMAND, I HAVE TENDED YOUR WOUNDS AS I WOULD HER OWN NAME OF A NAME!
YOUR INJURIES ARE HEALED! YOUR FLESH IS NOT EVEN MARKED!
IT PLEASES ME TO SEE YOU SO WELL AND FIT SILVER HAIR A FEAST IS BEING HELD THIS EVENING, TO COMMEMORATE THE CANDANCE'S VICTORY
YOUR PRESENCE IS... REQUESTED
AND SO, THAT NIGHT
BATHED AND PERFUMED AND COIFFED AND GOWNED LIKE QUEENS THEMSELVES, MARADA AND ARIANRHOD STRIDE PROUDLY INTO THE STATE DINING HALL.
MARADA STARHAIR, CALLED THE SHE WOLF ARIANRHOD, IN THE NAME OF THE LION THRONE OF MEROE..
I BID YOU WELCOME

LET ALL RISE AND LIFT THEIR CUPS IN HOMAGE TO A WARRIOR WHOSE PROWESS EQUALS MY OWN
COME, SHE-WOLF! SIT BY MY RIGHT HAND, IN THE PLACE OF HONOR.
MARADA IF THE QUEEN RESPECTS US SO MUCH, WHY DO I WISH WE WERE SOMEWHERE ELSE?
APPRECIATE THE GESTURE, LITTLE ONE WITHOUT THAT RESPECT, WE'D HAVE BEEN CARRION LONG AGO
WHY THIS CEREMONY, MAJESTY? HAS OUR SKILL AT ARMS WON US OUR FREEDOM?
NO BUT IT MIGHT
I APPRECIATE YOUR DIRECTNESS MARADA IN THAT, IN AS I SUSPECT SO MANY THINGS, WE ARE MUCH ALIKE
TOMORROW, I WISH TO STAGE THE ROYAL HUNT YOU AND THE GIRL WILL BE MY PREY
SUPPOSE WE REFUSE SLAVERY?
OF COURSE
THIS IS A SHARP KNIFE ASHAKE I COULD EASILY TAKE YOU HOSTAGE OR KILL YOU
PERHAPS AND MY ARCHERS WOULD SLAY ARIANRHOD AN INSTANT BEFORE THEY SLEW YOU
WHAT LIES AT THE END OF THIS HUNT?
DEATH OR FREEDOM
IN THAT CASE ASHAKE I DON'T SEE HOW EITHER OF US CAN REFUSE YOUR MOST GENEROUS OFFER
TO THE HUNT, STARHAR - AND VICTORY
TO THE HUNT, ASHAKE AND FREEDOM!

SYNOPSIS

When the U.S. Navy submarine the *Barb* is sunk by hostile aliens, only marine biologist *John Isaac* and the sub's commander, *Falco*, survive. Taken aboard the *Yorrikke*, the vessel that attacked them, Isaac and Falco learn that they have become the prisoners of a starfaring crew of whalers, and that their ship was destroyed simply to shanghai two human crewmen.

To prepare the earthmen for duty aboard his strange treelike vessel, *Captain Rotwang* turns them over to his ship's surgeons, enormous insects known as the *Xlexu*. The Xlexu strip Isaac of his skin, replacing it with a transparent membrane suited to the atmosphere within which he must now work. In addition, they have tampered with his mind, joining the two halves of his brain, which are separate in most humans, and giving him the ability to generate and release, but not control, an immensely powerful *aura*.

Overwhelmed by the changes made in him, by the alienism of his shipmates and his surroundings, Isaac seeks out the human companionship of Falco. However, all that he finds is the commander's body, headless but animated, mechanically tending the ship's enormous furnaces.

written and illustrated
by
RICK VEITCH

CHAPTER THREE
THE HUNT
THE SONGS OF THE WHALES ARE SOLEMN HYMNS..
SYNCOPATED YET UNCONNECTED..
MYSTICALLY RAPTUROUS YET MAGNIFICENTLY TRAGIC..
I - I HEAR YOU..
GROOOOOON
KRRRT
KLIK KLIK KLIK
WEEP WEEP
BARROOOM
DEEP IN THE BELLY OF THE WHALING VESSEL, YORRIKKE, WITH HIS SENSES ALTERED BY THE KLEXU SURGEONS, JOHN ISAAC ALONE IS WITNESS TO THE MIGHTY CHORUS THAT VIBRATES UP FROM BELOW.
..AND NOW I'M BEGINNING...
©1981 VEITCH
...TO SEE YOU!

ISAAC IS CARRIED THROUGH UNFOLDING LAYERS OF REALITY BY A VISIONARY RETINUE OF THE WHALE CHORUS.
...UNTIL THEIR ECHOING CRIES SUDDENLY DIMINISH.
GROOOOAN
BAREEEMM
BEFORE THE THUNDEROUS STRAINS OF ABRAXAS!
NOOOO!
TOPSIDE, THE MASTER OF THE YORRIKKE PASSIONATELY ADDRESSES HIS CREW.
AYE! 'TWAS ABRAXAS THAT BROUGHT ME THIS DEAD STUMP I NOW STAND UPON...
AYE! AYE! ABRAXAS IT WAS THAT MADE A POOR PEGGIN LUBBER OF ME FOREVER AND A DAY!
HE BE A DEMON.
NAY! PRINCE OF DEMONS!
HIS UNNATURAL RED HIDE AND GREAT HORNED HEAD ARE THE NAKED PROOF!
...OUR QUARRY IS NO MERE WHALE
AND OUR CAPTAIN IS NO MERE CAPTAIN
WHAT? DO YE THINK ME MAD THAT I'VE STEERED YE ACROSS A GALAXY SO AS TO AVENGE MY OWN LITTLE GRUDGE?
AYE! ROTWANG IS MADNESS MADDENED!
A FOAMIN' LUNATIC WHO WILL CHASE THE RED WHALE TILL HE SPOUTS BLACK BLOOD AND ROLLS FIN OUT!
AND THAT, ME HEARTIES WHO YE'VE SHIPPED WITH!
EXCEPT TO SAY I'VE ALSO A FINE REPUTATION FOR MAKING MY CREWS RICH RICH MEN
REMEMBER-- A SINGLE VOYAGE WITH ROTWANG IS WORTH ANY THREE OTHERS WHEN IT COMES TO PAYDAY!

W-WE'RE WITH YE, CAP'N.. BUT JUST HOW CAN WE FIND ONE WHALE ON THIS WHOLE BLEEDIN' PLANET?
THE XLEXU HAVE FIDDLED WITH THE EARTHMAN'S BRAINS, MR STALB...
THEY SAY HE CAN NOW SENSE THE BEAST AND LEAD US TO HIM.
THE QUESTION IS, WILL HE?
THAT'S RIGHT! NOW CAN YE NOT ANSWER THAT, MISTER FALCO?!
I-I THINK I WILL RESIST YOU, CAPTAIN.
ON EARTH HE WAS A SCIENTIST-- A MAN OF PRINCIPLES...
PRINCIPLES?
JUST WHAT GOOD ARE YER DAMN PRINCIPLES WHEN YER SKIN'S BEEN PEELED OFF?
OR FOR THAT MATTER WHEN YER HEAD LIES SEPARATED FROM YER BODY? EH?
NO!
SO TAKE A MESSAGE TO YOUR FRIEND FOR ME MR FALCO...!
NOOO!
TELL'M HE CAN RESTORE BOTH YER PRINCIPLES IF HELL ONLY FIND ME ABRAXAS!
NOOOO

BUT SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF SPACE AND TIME-- ABRAXAS HAS FOUND THE EARTHMAN!
BAREEEM
GOOD GOD.
UNTIL, LIKE A BOLT FROM THE BLUE, THE APPARITION IS GONE-- DISPERSED BY AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL--
HUH?
CATCH ME!
CATCH ME!
... THAT SIGNALS A REUNION ...OF SORTS.
YAAGH!
SMACK
OWN!
COMMANDER FALCO!
WHU.. WHU.. H-HOW..?
THOSE DAMN XLEXU SURGEONS, ISAAC-- SAME AS YOU!
BUT LISTEN! THEY'LL RESTORE US BOTH IF YOU'LL ONLY CO-OPERATE WITH ROTWANG!
I CAN'T DO THAT! ROTWANG HAS COME HERE TO HUNT AND KILL WHALES!
MY AURA HAS MINGLED WITH THEIRS..
THIS MAY SOUND CRAZY, BUT SOMEHOW I'M IN TOUCH WITH THE WHALES --THROUGH VISIONS!
DON'T GIVE ME THAT GODDAMN HIPPY "SAVE THE WHALES" SHIT!!
FOR CHRISSAKES THIS IS OUR LIVES YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!!

I'M STILL YOUR COMMANDING OFFICER AND I'M ORDERING YOU--CHOKE--TO...
OH GOD! PLEASE! PLEASE!
FALCO..
GET ME OUT OF THIS HELL!(SOB) I'VE BEEN KICKED AROUND LIKE A DAMN FOOTBALL--
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE... (CHOKE)
MAYBE I DO, FALCO..
MAYBE I DO...
SWINGING DOWN INTO THE SHIMMERING GREEN SKIES OF THE WHALE PLANET, THE YORR KKE IS NOT LONG IN ENCOUNTERING...
WHALES HO!
IS THERE A RED HORNED DEVIL AMONG THEM?
NAY, CAP'N! I MAKE ABOUT TEN BOWHEADS TO STARBOARD SIDE!
SO I SEE! RED WHALES OR NO, WE'VE STILL MANY AN EMPTY CASK TO FILL WITH OIL!
TO THE BOATS!
TO THE BOATS!!
AND A FULL CUP OF GROG TO THE MEN WHO PROVIDE THE TRADITIONAL FIRST GIBLET FOR MY TABLE!
YOU HEARD THE CAPTAIN! ..READY WITH THOSE RONS!

NOT A BRIGHT BUNCH BUT ENTHUSIASTIC! JUST THE TYPE OF MEN I NEED TO LOCK HORNS WITH THAT CRIMSON BEHEMOTH!
. NOW IF ONLY THAT SKINLESS FOOL WILL COME AROUND.
ROTWANG!
SO, EARTHMAN -- HAVE YE AT LAST DECIDED TO LEARN THE FINE ART OF WHALING?
SOME CALL IT MURDER, CAPTAIN
SO THEY DO! WILL YE BECOME OUR ACCOMPLICE IN THIS CRIME, THEN?
FIRST, I WANT SOME STRAIGHT ANSWERS--
CAN THE XLEXJ RESTORE FALCO AND I AS WE WERE BEFORE YOU HAD US MUTILATED?
IF I SO ORDER IT, OF COURSE!
AND IF I HELP YOU WILL YOU RETURN US TO EARTH?
WITH EASE, EARTHMAN! AND IN LESS THAN A YEAR'S TIME -- IF ALL GOES WELL!
NOW I'VE A QUESTION FOR YE...
IS IT TRUE YE CAN PERCEIVE THE SONGS OF THE WHALES?
YES... I SEE THEM AND HEAR THEM
AND FEEL THEM TOO.

AND ABRAXAS-- HAVE YE SEEN HIM, MAN?
I-I THINK SO... I SAW A VISION OF A GIGANTIC HORNED WHALE, WHO SINGS A SONG OF PAIN AND RAGE.. DEATH AND DESTRUCTION..
HELL'S BELLS! IT IS HE!
THEN ! VOW IT! HELP ME NAIL THAT BLOODY MONSTROSITY AND I'LL PUT YE SHIP-SHAPE AND FERRY YE BOTH HOME TO BOOT!
ALRIGHT I'LL DO IT...
GOOD
YE'LL BE NEEDED NOW ON THE FLENSING DECK, MR ISAAC! ASK STAUB TO SHOW YOU TO YOUR DUTIES!
WHAT?
WILL YE BE FOLLOWIN' MY ORDERS OR NOT?
THERE'S A MOUNTAIN OF FLESH AND AN OCEAN OF OIL TO BE STOWED NOW MOVE!
AND CONSIDER YE'RSELF INVITED TO FEAST ON THE GIBLET WITH ME AT MY MAIN MEAL, TOMORROW!
WHAT HAVE I DONE?
WHAT INDEED?
THE JOURNEY FROM EARTH HAS BEEN ONE FRAUGHT WITH HORROR UPON HORROR FOR JOHN ISAAC..
BUT THE SORREST BUSINESS OF ALL AWAITS HIM ON THE FLENSING DECK..

IT HAS SEEMED AN ETERNITY HE HAS SPENT ON THAT GORE SPLASHED DECK...
..BUT FINALLY IT IS OVER!
HIS ACHING BODY AND TORTURED SPIRIT ALLOW HIM NO CHOICE BUT SLEEP!
MERCIFUL SLEEP
BUT AS THE YORRKKE PASSES OVER INTO THE NIGHT SIDE OF THE WHALE PLANET...
RISE AND SHINE, KITTEN! I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE BUT THIS IS SPHINX'S NEST YOU'RE SNOOZING IN...
I'LL HAVE TO ASK YOU TO LEAVE! I'VE JUST COME OFF A DOUBLE SHIFT IN THE HIGH BRANCHES AND I'M IN NO MOOD FOR FUN AND GAMES TONIGHT!
¡HUH?! I-I'M SORRY--I JUST FELL HERE I COULDN'T MAKE ANOTHER STEP!
I'LL BET YOU'RE THE FAMOUS EARTHMAN THAT ROTWANG WENT SO FAR OFF COURSE TO SHANGHAI!
IT LOOKS LIKE THE OLD FIEND HAS PUT YOU THROUGH YOUR PACES TODAY!
I'M TERRIBLY TIRED AND CONFUSED--SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED.
OH ALL RIGHT! AMMA KNOWS I'VE SPENT THE NIGHT WITH MANY STRANGER THAN YOU, KITTEN.
CUDDLE UP NOW. SWEET DREAMS!
UH THANK YOU, I.
TIRED AS ISAAC IS, SLEEP, IT SEEMS, WILL BE LONG IN COMING THIS NIGHT!

next issue ABRAXAS AND THE EARTHMAN continues

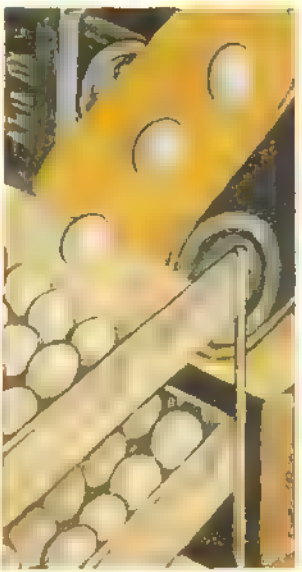
TRANSITION
OH GOD NO!

SCREEE
BLAM
OH GOD PLEASE SAVE ME SAVE ME SAVE ME
KABOOM

HA-ANK YA BEEN IN THE HENHOUSE Y T?

DAMN THAT WOMAN EVERY TIME I GET YA WORK N
GODDAMN I'M GITTIN TA IT MAGG E

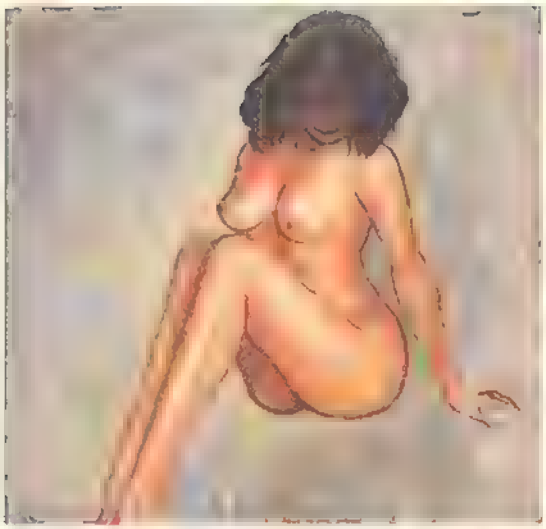
YESS REE EVERYTH N LOOKS JUST F NE



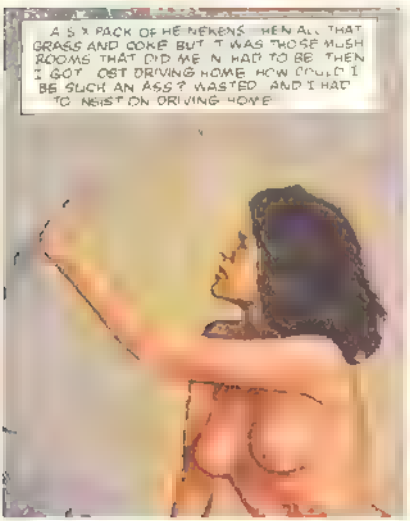
ANK YA BEEN
YES MAGG E DEAR TOMORROW WE'LL HAVE A FRESH BATCH

JEEE ZUSSS

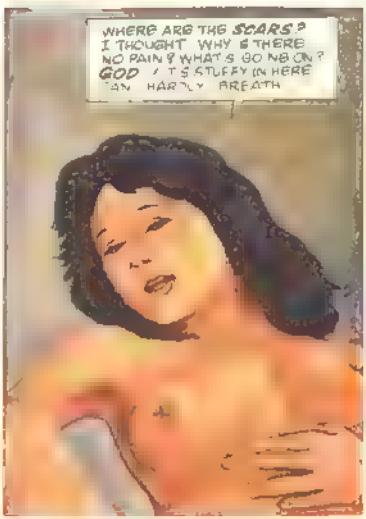
BREAKFAST AT THE FARMHOUSE
MAKE SOME CHOPS TOMMORRA MORNIN FOR A CHANGE
WHY DON CHA NOUBATE ANOTHER BATCH DEAR ? CUT THAT OUT JANE TAKIN AFTER YER FATHER AIN'T GONNA DO YA ANY GOOD!
I JUST PUT UP A BATCH ANYWAYS I AIN'T GOT TIME GOTTA GET THE HARVESTIN DONE BEFORE THE FROST
WE'LL GONNA HAVE A PARTY ONE ALRIGHT
MARTIN'S WIFE MARY WROTE ME BOUT THE ONE THEY HAD IN KANSAS FROZE HALF THEIR CROP
THAT POOR DEVIL ALL THE MAN EVER WANTED WAS A FEW ACRES AN SOME PEACE SEEMS ALL HE EVER GETS
I LIKE EM

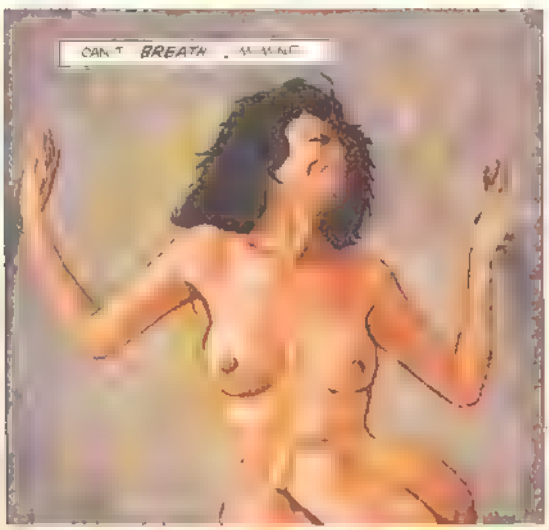


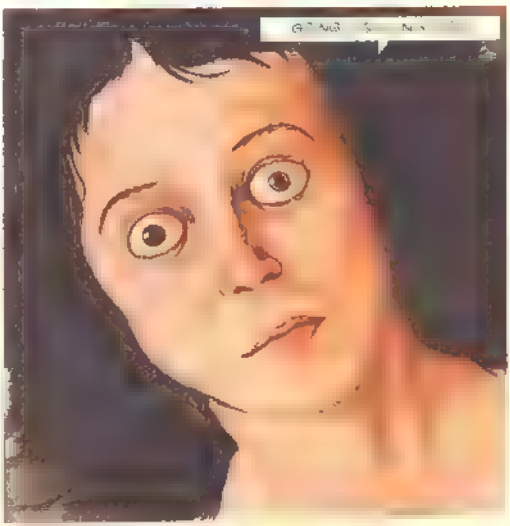
WHERE THE [illegible] AM I?
HOLD ON HERE

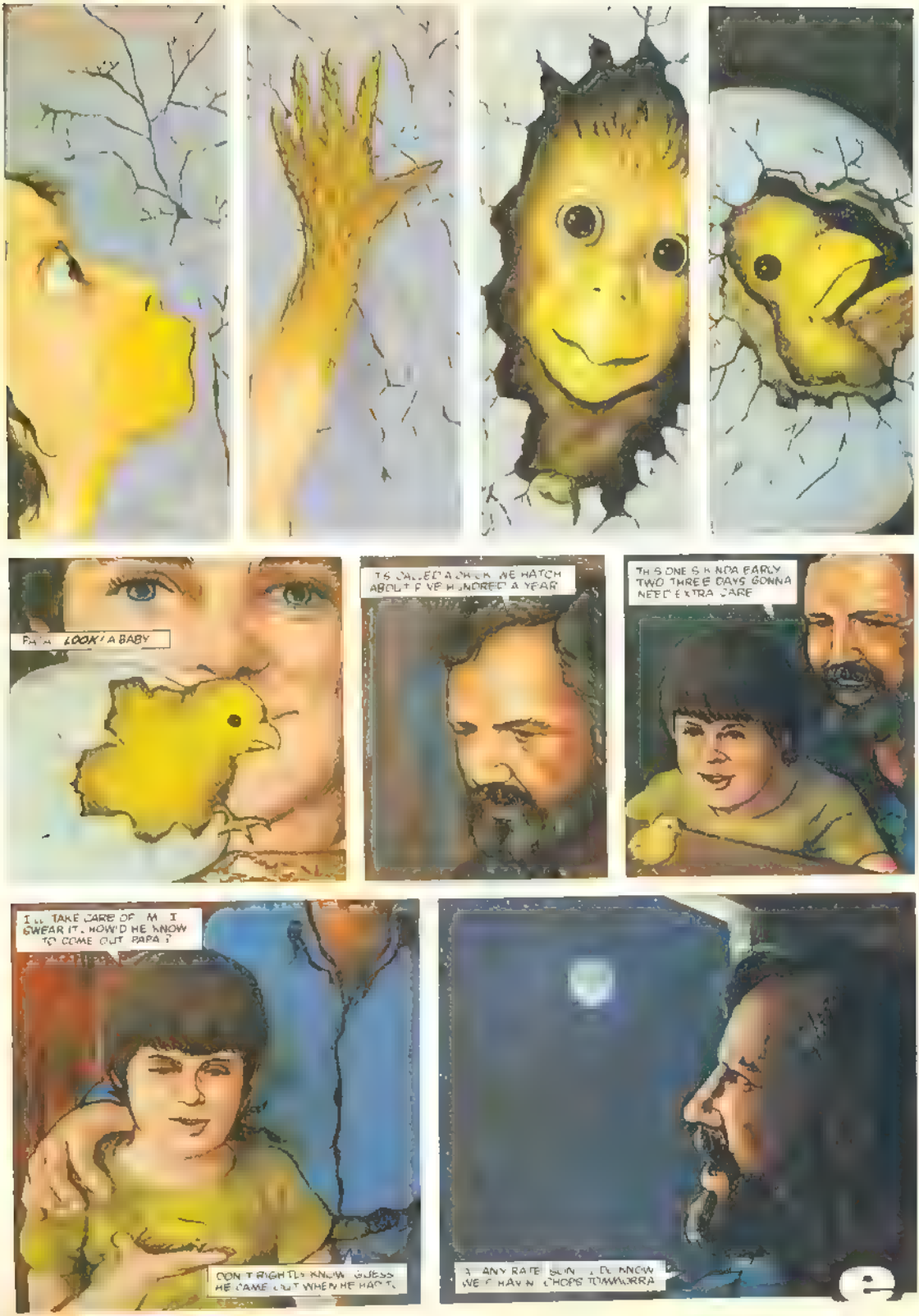

A SIX PACK OF HEINEKENS THEN ALL THAT GRASS AND COKE BUT IT WAS THOSE MUSHROOMS THAT DID ME IN HAD TO BE THEN I GOT LOST DRIVING HOME HOW COULD I BE SUCH AN ASS? WASTED AND I HAD TO INSIST ON DRIVING HOME

WAIT A MINUTE THEN THAT DEAR THAT NUTTY DEER RAN OUT IN FRONT OF ME JESUS ALMOST KILLED ME SURE WAS [illegible] BUT WHAT ABOUT


WHERE ARE THE SCARS?
I THOUGHT WHY IS THERE NO PAIN? WHAT'S GOING ON?
GOD IT'S STUFFY IN HERE
CAN HARDLY BREATH


CAN'T BREATH

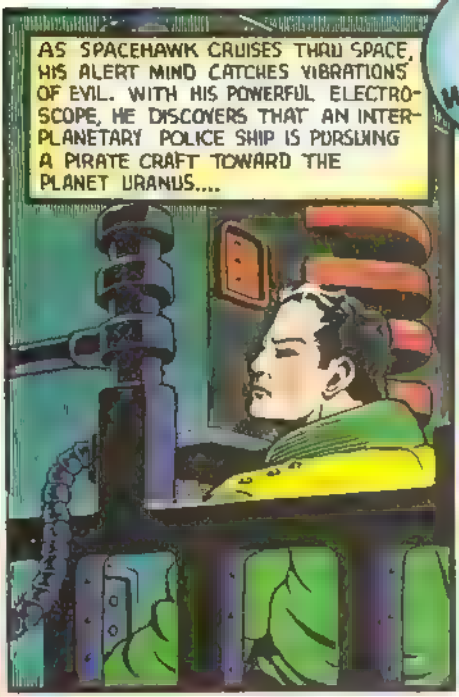

GOING


PAPA LOOK! A BABY
IS CALLED A CHICK WE HATCH ABOUT FIVE HUNDRED A YEAR
THIS ONE S KINDA EARLY TWO THREE DAYS GONNA NEED EXTRA CARE
I'LL TAKE CARE OF M I SWEAR IT. HOW'D HE KNOW TO COME OUT PAPA?
DON T RIGHTLY KNOW GUESS HE CAME OUT WHEN HE HAD T
ANYRATE SUN I'LL KNOW WE'LL HAVIN CHOPS TOMMORRA

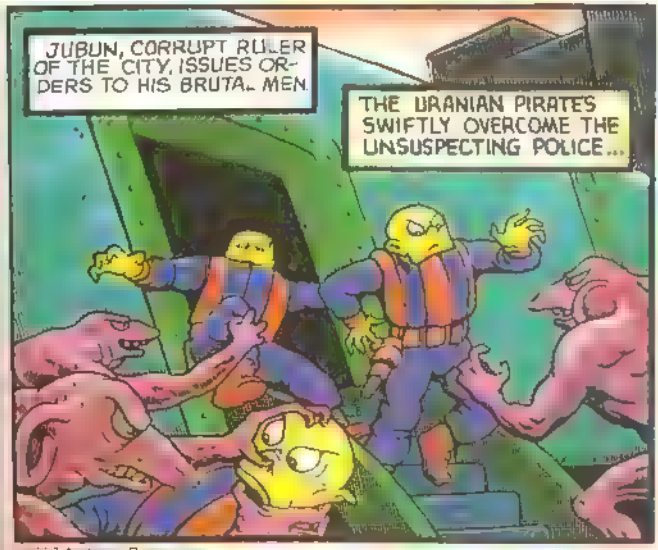
SPACEHAWK

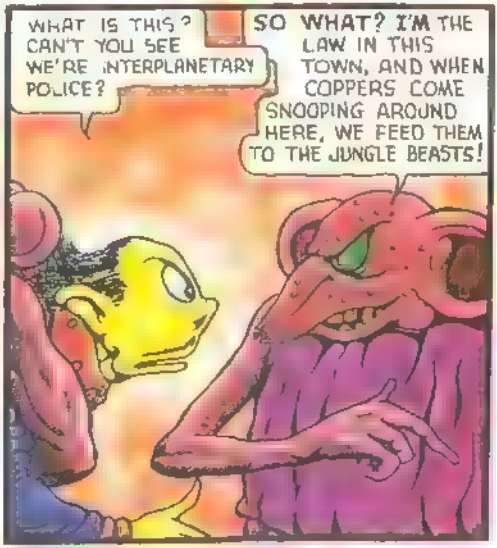
· THE SUPERHUMAN ENEMY OF CRIME ·

by BASIL WOLVERTON


AS SPACEHAWK CRUISES THRU SPACE, HIS ALERT MIND CATCHES VIBRATIONS OF EVIL. WITH HIS POWERFUL ELECTRO-SCOPE, HE DISCOVERS THAT AN INTER-PLANETARY POLICE SHIP IS PURSUING A PIRATE CRAFT TOWARD THE PLANET URANUS....

THOSE PIRATES ARE LEADING THAT POLICE SHIP INTO THE CITY OF GARK! IT'S A PIRATE TOWN, AND THE POLICE WILL BE TRAPPED! PERHAPS I CAN GET THERE IN TIME TO HELP!


JUBUN, CORRUPT RULER OF THE CITY, ISSUES ORDERS TO HIS BRUTAL MEN.
THE URANIAN PIRATES SWIFTLY OVERCOME THE UNSUSPECTING POLICE...


WHAT IS THIS? CAN'T YOU SEE WE'RE INTERPLANETARY POLICE?
SO WHAT? I'M THE LAW IN THIS TOWN, AND WHEN COPPERS COME SNOOPING AROUND HERE, WE FEED THEM TO THE JUNGLE BEASTS!

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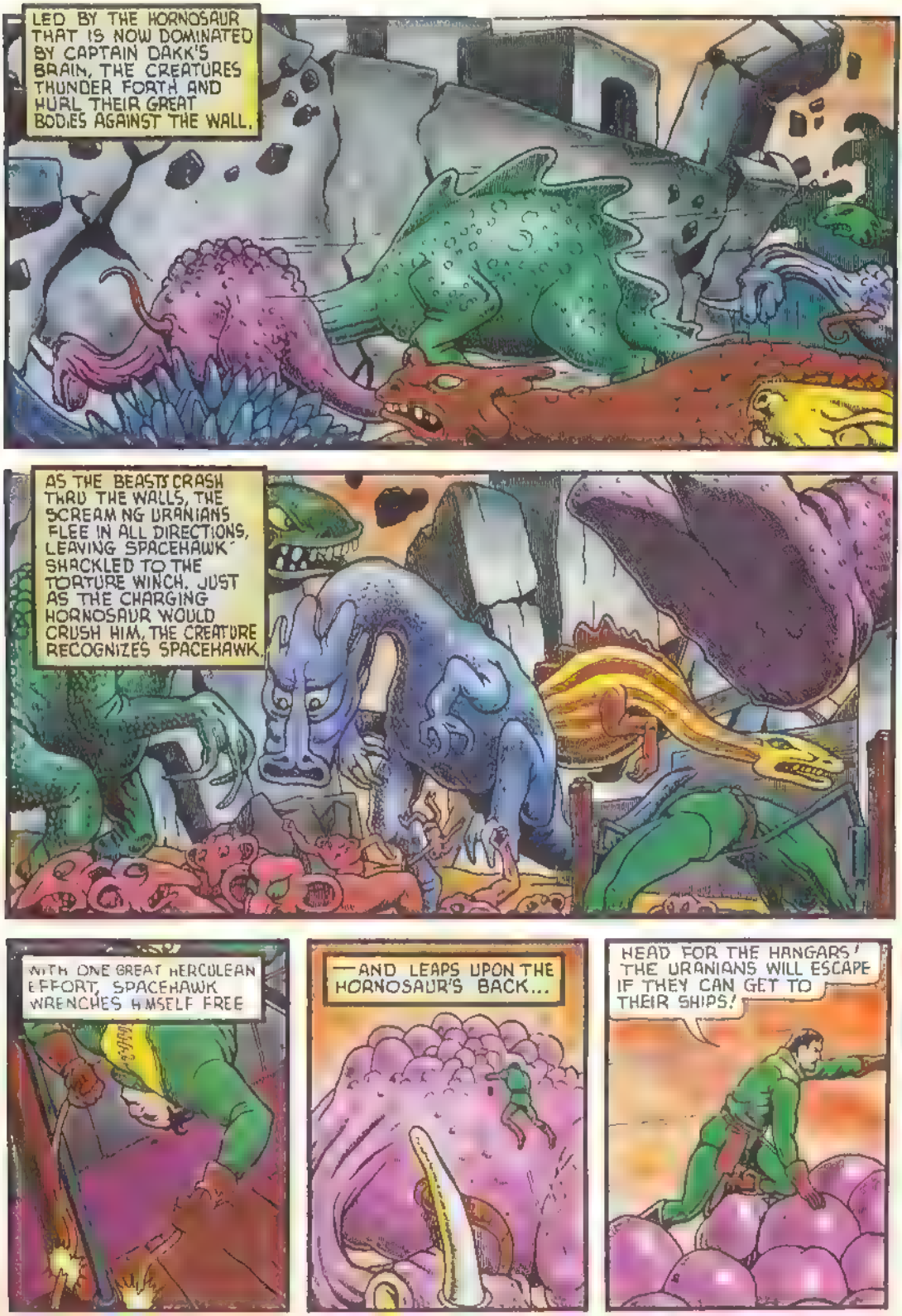
OVER THE WALL WITH THESE SWINE WHO CALL THEMSELVES THE LAW!
AS THE MEN ARE HURLED TO THE GROUND FAR BELOW, FIERCE JUNGLE MONSTERS RUSH FORTH TO DEVOUR THEM.
ONLY SLIGHTLY INJURED BY HIS FALL, THE POLICE COMMANDER, DAKK, DARTS FROM UNDER THE SNARLING BEASTS, AND RUNS FOR THE JUNGLE...
MINUTES LATER HE IS DEEP WITHIN THE HEAVY VEGETATION, AND SAFE FROM THE URANIANS. THEN SUDDENLY A JUNGLE BAT SWOOPS UPON HIM.....
AT THAT MOMENT SPACEHAWK DROPS FROM HIS SHIP AND LANDS WITH DEADLY IMPACT ON THE CREATURE'S SKULL.
—AND GOES TO CAPTAIN DAKK, WHO HAS FALLEN FROM THE TREE.
SPACEHAWK! IF ONLY YOU'D ARRIVED SOONER! MY CREW IS DEAD AND THIS IS THE END OF ME!
TAKE IT EASY, CAPTAIN DAKK! I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO!
IT'S TOO LATE TO SAVE MY BODY! BUT MY BRAIN— YOU COULD SAVE IT! WITH YOUR GREAT SURGICAL KNOWLEDGE, YOU COULD GRAFT IT INTO ONE OF THE BEASTS OF THIS JUNGLE! PERHAPS THEN I COULD AVENGE MY MEN!
ALL RIGHT, I'LL TRY! BUT I CAN'T SAY HOW THIS WILL TURN OUT!

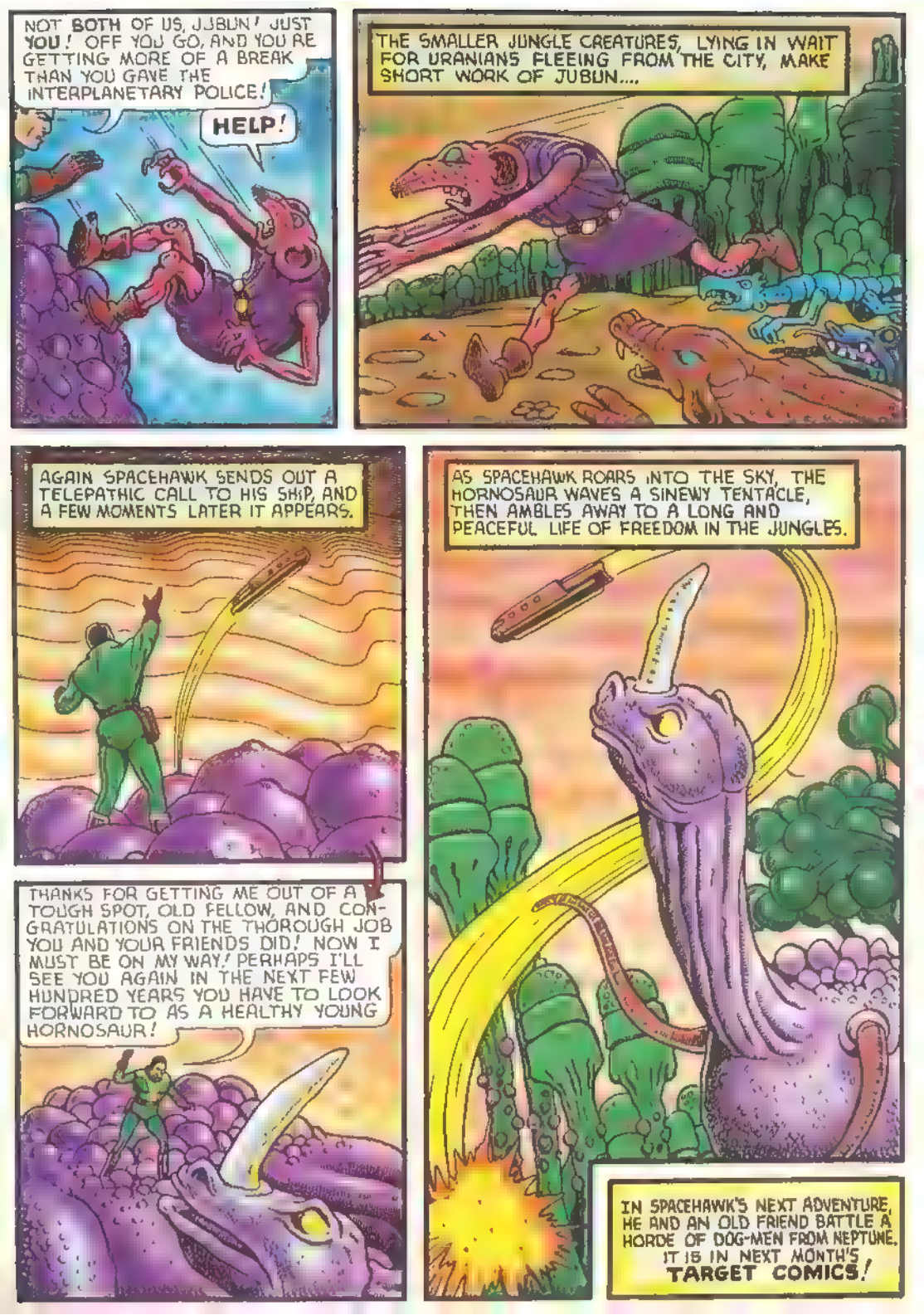
TEN MINUTES LATER THE PLUTONIAN'S BODY SUCCUMBS TO ITS WOUNDS, BUT THE BRAIN, CAREFULLY REMOVED FROM THE SKULL, REMAINS ALIVE IN A STRANGE LIQUID SPACEHAWK HAS PREPARED....
NOW TO CAPTURE SOME CREATURE IN WHICH TO PLANT THE BRAIN!
SPACEHAWK PATIENTLY WAITS AT THE DOOR OF HIS SHIP. PRESENTLY THE GROUND QUAKES WITH THE APPROACH OF A BEAST. THE JUNGLE GROWTHS PART, AND ——
A MONSTROUS HORNOSAUR CRASHES INTO VIEW! LEAPING IN FRONT OF THE CREATURE, SPACEHAWK SPRAYS A POTENT ANESTHETIC INTO ITS NOSTRILS....
I'LL HAVE TO WORK FAST! NO TELLING WHEN SOME OTHER BEAST WILL DECIDE TO INTERRUPT THIS OPERATION!
LEAVING IN THAT PART OF THE BRAIN WHICH CONTROLS THE HORNOSAURS MUSCLES, SPACEHAWK REMOVES THE REST, AND SKILLFULLY SUBSTITUTES THE HUMAN BRAIN OF CAPTAIN DAKK.
A LITTLE OF THIS RAY, AND THE INCISIONS WILL BE COMPLETELY HEALED!
4

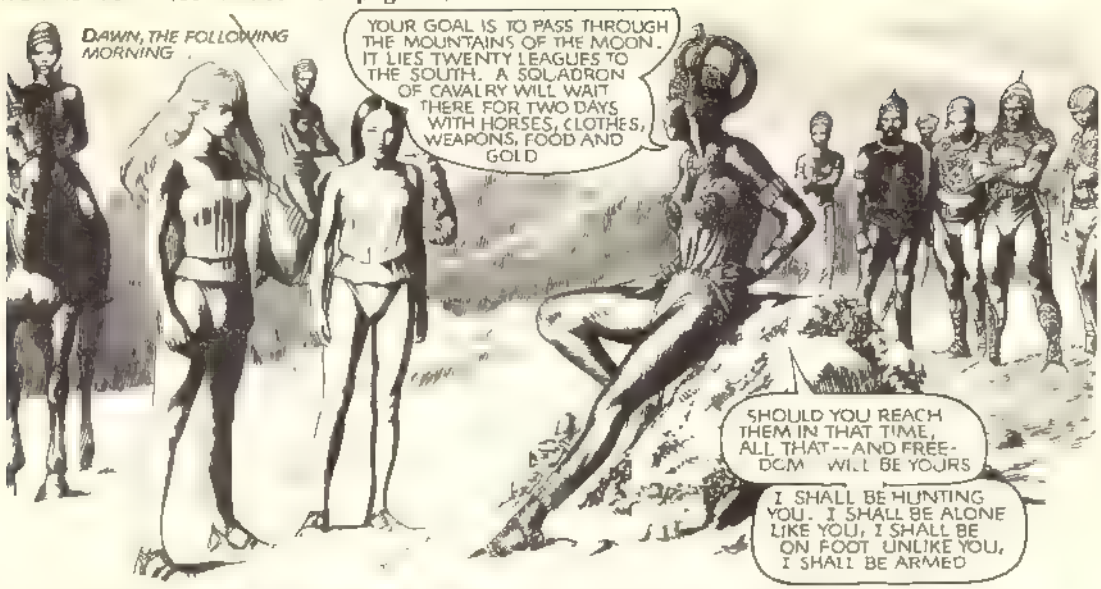
HE SHOULD RECOVER FROM THE ANESTHETIC ANY MINUTE NOW! YES — HE'S BEGINNING TO MOVE!
THE MONSTER SLOWLY GETS TO ITS FEET AND INTENTLY SURVEYS SPACEHAWK.
CAN YOU UNDERSTAND ME? IF YOU'RE ALL RIGHT NOD YOUR HEAD!
HE'S NODDING HIS HEAD! THE OPERATION IS A SUCCESS, BUT THE POOR BRUTE WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO TALK!
GOOD LUCK TO YOU AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT AVENGING YOUR MEN! I THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF THAT!
SPACEHAWK ROARS OUT OF THE JUNGLE, AND FLIES INTO THE CITY OF GARK.
SPACEHAWK! COME RIGHT IN! THIS IS AN UNEXPECTED PLEASURE!
JUBUN I'VE COME TO SETTLE WITH YOU AND YOUR MEN FOR DESTROYING THE POLICE SHIP THAT LANDED HERE THIS MORNING!
BUT SPACEHAWK— SURELY YOU'RE NOT ACCUSING ME OF SUCH A THING! THE MOMENT I HEARD ABOUT IT I ORDERED THE OFFENDERS CLAMPED IN THE TORTURE RACKS! I DON'T TOLERATE MURDERERS IN THIS CITY!

I'M NOT HERE TO LISTEN TO YOUR LIES, JUBUN! YOU AND YOUR FOLLOWERS HAVE TO PAY FOR YOUR CRIMES, AND I'M HERE TO SEE THAT YOU DO PAY!
SPACEHAWK'S KEEN MIND WARNS HIM OF DANGER BEHIND HIM. HE WHIRLS, AND —
THERE'S ONLY ONE KIND OF TREATMENT YOU MUGS RESPECT!
AND THIS STEEL WHIP IS SOMETHING YOU WILL RESPECT!
BEFORE SPACEHAWK CAN FREE HIMSELF, MORE URANIANS RUSH IN UPON HIM.....
HE IS DRAGGED AWAY AND CLAMPED IN A TORTURE DEVICE
WHEN THIS MACHINE BEGINS TO PULL YOUR ARMS AND LEGS OUT OF THEIR SOCKETS, YOU'LL WISH YOU'D NEVER POKED YOUR NOSE IN MY AFFAIRS!
START IT UP YOU MEN! AND DON'T RUN IT TOO FAST! I WANT HIM TO SUFFER PLENTY BEFORE IT PULLS HIM APART!
WITH HIS MEN BOISTEROUSLY JEERING SPACEHAWK, JUBUN PUTS ALL HIS MAD STRENGTH INTO USING HIS WHIP..
UP ON THE WALL, ONE OF THE GUARDS GLANCES OUT TOWARD THE JUNGLE. THE SMIRK FADES FROM HIS LIPS AS HE STARES AT AN ALARMING SIGHT....
HERE COMES A WHOLE ARMY OF JUNGLE MONSTERS! LOOKS AS THOUGH THEY'RE GOING TO TRY CRASHING INTO THE CITY!

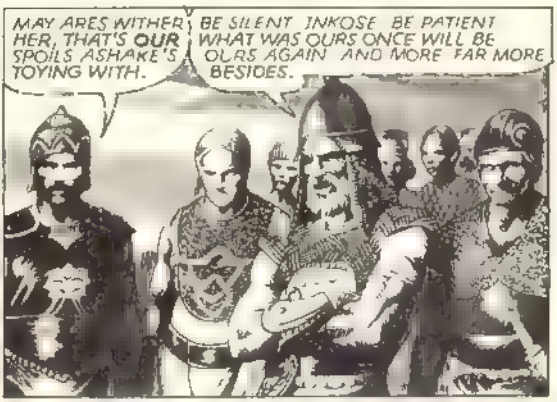

LED BY THE HORNOSAUR THAT IS NOW DOMINATED BY CAPTAIN DAKK'S BRAIN, THE CREATURES THUNDER FORTH AND HURL THEIR GREAT BODIES AGAINST THE WALL.
AS THE BEASTS CRASH THRU THE WALLS, THE SCREAMING URANIANS FLEE IN ALL DIRECTIONS, LEAVING SPACEHAWK SHACKLED TO THE TORTURE WINCH. JUST AS THE CHARGING HORNOSAUR WOULD CRUSH HIM, THE CREATURE RECOGNIZES SPACEHAWK.
WITH ONE GREAT HERCULEAN EFFORT, SPACEHAWK WRENCHES HIMSELF FREE
—AND LEAPS UPON THE HORNOSAUR'S BACK...
HEAD FOR THE HANGARS! THE URANIANS WILL ESCAPE IF THEY CAN GET TO THEIR SHIPS!

THOSE BRUTES WILL GET SPACEHAWK AND MY MEN BUT THEY WON'T GET ME!
8
SPACEHAWK'S KEEN EYES SPOT JUBUN'S SHIP EMERGING FROM HIS QUARTERS.
THERE GOES JUBUN! WE CAN'T LET HIM ESCAPE!
THE HORNOSAUR LUNGES TOWARD THE SHIP, AND RIPS IT OPEN.....
JUBUN LEAPS OUT BEFORE THE CRAFT CRASHES....
NOW I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A DOSE OF THE SORT OF STUFF YOU'VE BEEN HANDING OUT TO OTHERS!
SPACEHAWK! HOW DID YOU—? LOOK OUT! THAT MONSTER WILL KILL US!

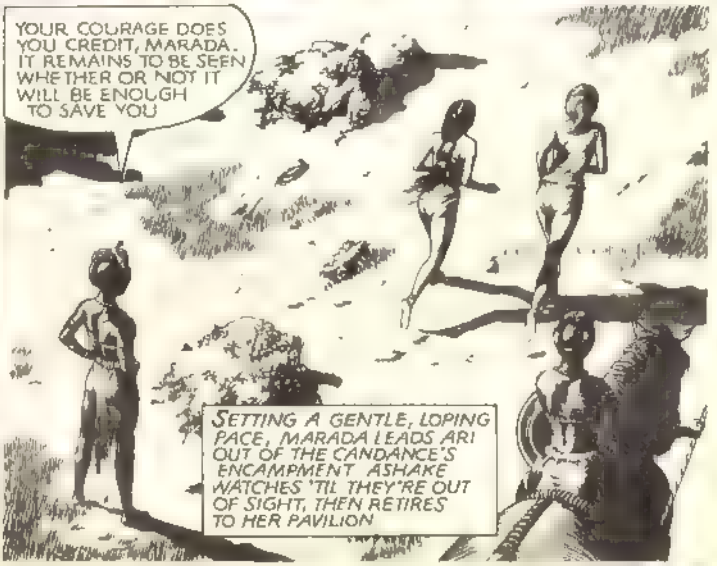

NOT BOTH OF US, JUBUN! JUST YOU! OFF YOU GO, AND YOU'RE GETTING MORE OF A BREAK THAN YOU GAVE THE INTERPLANETARY POLICE!
HELP!
THE SMALLER JUNGLE CREATURES, LYING IN WAIT FOR URANIANS FLEEING FROM THE CITY, MAKE SHORT WORK OF JUBUN....
AGAIN SPACEHAWK SENDS OUT A TELEPATHIC CALL TO HIS SHIP, AND A FEW MOMENTS LATER IT APPEARS.
THANKS FOR GETTING ME OUT OF A TOUGH SPOT, OLD FELLOW, AND CONGRATULATIONS ON THE THOROUGH JOB YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS DID! NOW I MUST BE ON MY WAY! PERHAPS I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN IN THE NEXT FEW HUNDRED YEARS YOU HAVE TO LOOK FORWARD TO AS A HEALTHY YOUNG HORNOSAUR!
AS SPACEHAWK ROARS INTO THE SKY, THE HORNOSAUR WAVES A SINEWY TENTACLE, THEN AMBLES AWAY TO A LONG AND PEACEFUL LIFE OF FREEDOM IN THE JUNGLES.
IN SPACEHAWK'S NEXT ADVENTURE, HE AND AN OLD FRIEND BATTLE A HORDE OF DOG-MEN FROM NEPTUNE. IT IS IN NEXT MONTH'S TARGET COMICS!


DAWN, THE FOLLOWING MORNING
YOUR GOAL IS TO PASS THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON. IT LIES TWENTY LEAGUES TO THE SOUTH. A SQUADRON OF CAVALRY WILL WAIT THERE FOR TWO DAYS WITH HORSES, CLOTHES, WEAPONS, FOOD AND GOLD
SHOULD YOU REACH THEM IN THAT TIME, ALL THAT--AND FREEDOM WILL BE YOURS
I SHALL BE HUNTING YOU. I SHALL BE ALONE LIKE YOU, I SHALL BE ON FOOT UNLIKE YOU, I SHALL BE ARMED

HAS YOUR PREY EVER ESCAPED, ASHAKE?
NEVER


MAY ARES WITHER HER, THAT'S OUR SPOILS ASHAKE'S TOYING WITH.
BE SILENT INKOSE BE PATIENT WHAT WAS OURS ONCE WILL BE OURS AGAIN AND MORE FAR MORE BESIDES.

THE SUN HAS CLEARED THE HORIZON YOU MAY LEAVE WHENEVER YOU WISH. I WISH YOU AND YOUR CUB GOOD LUCK, SHE-WOLF
LUCK IS FOR AMATEURS AND CHILDREN, ASHAKE. WE ARE NEITHER


YOUR COURAGE DOES YOU CREDIT, MARADA. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER OR NOT IT WILL BE ENOUGH TO SAVE YOU
SETTING A GENTLE, LOPING PACE, MARADA LEADS ARI OUT OF THE CANDANCE'S ENCAMPMENT ASHAKE WATCHES 'TIL THEY'RE OUT OF SIGHT, THEN RETIRES TO HER PAVILION

TO EMERGE TWO HOURS LATER DRESSED AND READY INDEED, EAGER -- FOR THE HUNT.
THE FATES WILLING, COMMANDER, I WILL SEE YOU BY SUNSET TOMORROW
GOOD FORTUNE ATTEND YOU MAJESTY
WITH A SLIGHT SMILE, ASHAKE SETS OFF ACROSS THE BROAD SAVANNA, HER EYES ALIGHT WITH ANTICIPATION.
AT LAST, SHE SENSES, THE ROYAL HUNT WILL BECOME THE ULTIMATE TEST IT WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO BE
WHY NOT TAKE CARE OF HER NOW, KEOS?
BECAUSE THERE'S A BETTER TIME AND PLACE, CASTA. SOONER OR LATER, SHE'LL CATCH THE SHE-WOLF THAT'S WHEN WE'LL MAKE OUR MOVE.
HOW TYPICALLY ARROGANT. ASHAKE IS ALONE, IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, YET SHE BELIEVES HERSELF SAFE FROM ATTACK
SHE BELIEVES NONE WILL DARE VIOLATE THE SANCTITY OF HER PRECIOUS HUNT
FAR AHEAD...
NO SIGN OF PURSUIT, BUT I KNOW ASHAKE'S OUT THERE SOMEWHERE. WE'RE LEAVING AN EASY TRAIL THROUGH THIS TALL GRASS, BUT THAT CAN'T BE HELPED.
WE HAD A HEAD START--AND WE'VE MADE GOOD PROGRESS SINCE-- BUT SHE KNOWS THE LAND
SHE'S CARRYING MORE WEIGHT, BUT SHE'S ALSO USED TO THIS DAMNABLE HEAT
WE COULD PROBABLY ESCAPE EASILY USING ARI'S SPELL OF TRANSPORTATION--BUT WHO KNOWS WHERE WE'D END UP? FOR THE MOMENT, WE'RE BETTER OFF AS WE ARE.
AND, AS WELL, I DEARLY WANT TO BEAT ASHAKE AT HER OWN GAME
ON YOUR FEET, ARIANRHOD. YOUR REST'S OVER.
JUST A LITTLE MORE, MARADA, PLEASE. I'M SO TIRED
IF YOU'D LIKE, ASHAKE CAN ARRANGE TO MAKE YOUR REST *PERMANENT*. LET'S MOVE CHILD.

THE HOURS PASS SWIFTLY, THE MILES LESS SO. BY NIGHTFALL, THE SAVANNA HAS GIVEN WAY TO A THICK, VERDANT FOREST. BOTH MARADA AND ARI ARE BEYOND FATIGUE, BEYOND PAIN THEY THINK NO FURTHER AHEAD THAN EACH STEP...
. AND EACH ONE THEY TAKE IS A TRIUMPH
FINALLY, AS THE WOODS TURN BLACK AROUND THEM, MARADA CALLS A HALT
WE'LL DO OURSELVES MORE HARM THAN GOOD BLUNDERING ABOUT IN THE DARK BETTER TO REST 'TIL MOONRISE, THEN USE ITS LIGHT TO SHOW US OUR WAY
MY LEGS, MY LUNGS, MY MUSCLES -- EVERYTHING SEEMS LACED WITH GROUND GLASS 'M SO TIRED, I CAN'T EVEN SUMMON THE ENERGY TO HEAL MYSELF
ENDURE FOR NOW, ARI CONSERVE YOUR STRENGTH
WHY DO WE HAVE TO RUN? ASHAKE S ALONE - WHY DON'T WE FIGHT, AMBUSH HER, DO SOMETHING?!
IT'S TOO SOON WE'RE TOO FAR FROM OUR GOAL
MARADA! I SENSE THE CANDANCE'S LIFE FORCE!
SHE'S CLOSE BY!!
FATIGUE -- AND THE TERRIBLE STRAIN OF THE MURDEROUS ALL-DAY RUN -- INSTANTLY TURN ARI'S FLASH OF TERROR AT HER MOMENTARY PSYCHIC RAPPORT WITH ASHAKE INTO PURE PANIC
ARI, NO! STAY WITH ME, CHILD!
SHE SPRINGS AWAY FROM MARADA, NOT CARING WHERE SHE GOES.
WANTING ONLY TO FLEE AS FAST AS SHE CAN.

SHE DOESN'T GET VERY FAR
ARI, STOP! YOU'RE DOING PRECISELY WHAT SHE WANTS!
OH--!
MARADA
--HELP!!
DAMN!
HANG ON, ARI! I'M COMING!
I.. I'M A MESS. LOTS OF BUMPS AND BRUISES BUT NOTHING SEEMS BROKEN, THANK GOODNESS.
TRULY, THE GODDESS SMILES ON FOOLS AND CHILDREN. I'VE ACTED LIKE BOTH. WHERE AM I, ANYWAY? WHAT'S THAT--?!
OOO
BONES.
HUMAN BONES!
EEEEE
WHAT'S THE MATTER, THIS BONE YARD TOO MUCH FOR YOU? I'M NOT SURPRISED, AN ARMY MUST HAVE DIED HERE
CRY YOUR HEART OUT, ARI. YOU'LL FEEL BETTER, THAT'S IT, THAT'S THE SPIRIT.
Oh, MARADA MOTHER, I, I
IT'S ALL RIGHT. YOU'RE SAFE, DAUGHTER, BELOVED DAUGHTER
YOU CALLED ME "MOTHER" BACK THERE
DO YOU MIND? MY MOTHER DIED IN CHILDBIRTH. I NEVER KNEW HER. SINCE WE MET, YOU'VE HELPED ME, COUNSELLED ME, TAUGHT ME, CARED FOR ME--LOVED ME WHAT MY FATHER'S WIFE WAS IN NAME
YOU'VE BECOME IN FACT. I'M SORRY IF THAT OFFENDS OR UPSETS YOU. I.. I NEVER MEANT TO TELL
OFFEND" ME? ARI, IF I LIVE FOREVER, I CAN THINK OF NO GREATER GIFT, OR HONOR

SUNRISE I'M STARVING, MARADA HOW MUCH FURTHER?
WE'RE IN THE FOOTHILLS IF WE MAINTAIN THIS PACE AND DON'T RUN INTO TROUBLE ..
WE SHOULD REACH THE PASS BY MID AFTERNOON
SUDDENLY ..
ARI, LOOK OUT!
AN ARROW!
THE CANDANCE?
WHO ELSE? SHE MUST HAVE CUT AHEAD OF US DURING THE NIGHT SHE CHOSE THIS SITE WELL THERE'S OPEN GROUND ALL AROUND US SHE'S UPHILL, SHOOTING FROM DEEP SHADOW
WHILE WE'RE SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE SUN
STAY DOWN, ARI, NO MATTER WHAT.
I'M GOING TO TRY TO DRAW HER ATTENTION
CROUCHING LOW AND MOVING FAST, MARADA SLINKS ALONG THE RIDGE. AS EXPECTED, ASHAKE'S ARROWS FOLLOW HER, EACH LANDING CLOSER THAN THE ONE BEFORE, UNTIL
AAAIIIT--!
THE SUN WAS IN MY EYES WHEN I SHOT FOR AN INSTANT, I WAS DAZZLE BLINDED
I THINK I KILLED HER I'M SURE I HIT HER BUT I'D BEST MAKE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN BEFORE I TURN TO THE CHILD.
I'M SORRY IT CAME TO THIS MARADA WAS THE WORTHIEST OF FOES
HERE IS WHERE SHE FELL, DOWN THIS SCREE
SHE'S GONE!

I'VE BEEN TRICKED!
INDEED YOU HAVE!
AND ONCE I'VE DISPOSED OF YOUR BOW
AND BORROWED A BLADE
WE'LL CONTINUE THIS DUEL ON MORE EQUAL TERMS
YOUR KNIFE, SHE WOLF, VERSUS MY SWORD?
I'D HARDLY CALL THAT EQUAL
IN OUR CASE, ASHAKE, IT'S NOT THE WEAPONS THAT MAKE THE DIFFERENCE
...IT'S WHAT WE DO WITH THEM.
YOU HAVE THE REACH-

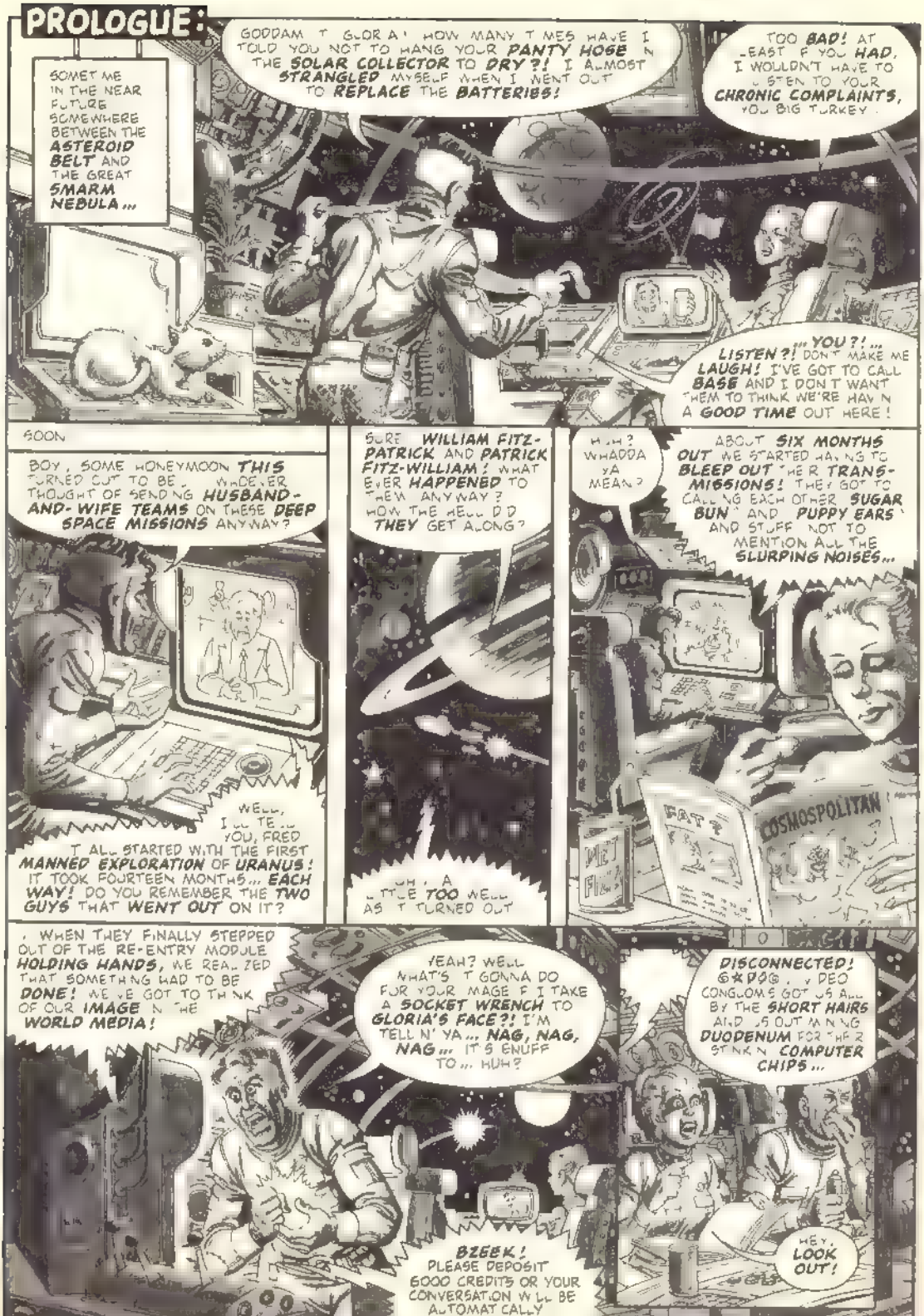
--I HAVE THE SPEED!
DAMN! I'D HAVE CUT HER BUT FOR HER ARMOR, AND SHE KNOWS IT
SHE'LL NOT LET ME TRY SUCH A TRICK AGAIN
FORTUNATELY,
IT ISN'T THE ONLY ONE I KNOW.
MY LEG--!
WE'RE BOTH TIRED, DRAWING ON OUR DEEPEST RESERVES OF ENERGY
AND WE'RE BOTH USING THAT ENERGY AT A FEROCIOUS RATE. WHICHEVER OF US OUTLASTS THE OTHER WILL BE THE VICTOR
MAGNIFICENT!
ALL MY LIFE I'VE DREAMED, HOPED, PRAYED OF MEETING A WARRIOR LIKE YOU, MARADA AN EQUAL. ONE AGAINST WHOM I COULD TRULY PROVE MY TITLE AS "FIRST SWORD" OF MEROE
,SN'T IT A SHAME YOUR DREAM'S TURNING INTO A NIGHTM--
UNNFFF!
I AM NOT BEATEN SO EASILY, STARHAIR
THE RAZOR-KEEN BLADE BITES DEEP INTO THE GROUND AND FOR A SPLIT-SECOND, STICKS THERE WITH EYE-BLURRING SPEED IGNORING THE SHRIEKS OF PROTEST FROM HER MUSCLES AND JOINTS, MARADA SEIZES THE OPPORTUNITY
NOR AM I

AND LANDS WITH ALL HER WEIGHT ON THE MONARCH'S SWORD ARM A RIGHT UPPERCUT TO THE JAW COMPLETES THE MANEUVER. .
OWW!
.. AND ENDS THEIR DUEL.
YIELD, OR JOIN YOUR ANCESTORS
A MOST SENSIBLE DECISION
I YIELD. THE HUNT IS OVER YOU HAVE WON.
LET US HOPE, SHE-WOLF, THAT YOUR NEXT DECISION IS AS SENSIBLE
WHAT?!
ARI!
THEY CAUGHT ME BY SURPRISE, MARADA. I WAS SO ENGROSSED IN THE FIGHT SO CONCERNED FOR YOU, THAT I DIDN'T NOTICE THEIR APPROACH TIL IT WAS TOO LATE
CAPTAIN KEOS, WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!
THAT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS, MAJESTY
THROW AWAY THE KNIFE, MARADA, OR MY COMRADE INKOSE WILL SNAP YOUR CUB'S NECK

MARADA WON'T TRY ANYTHING SO LONG AS I'M IN DANGER. THESE MERCENARIES SEE HER AS THE PRIMARY THREAT. THEIR ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON HER AND THE CANOANCE. I'M NOTHING TO THEM
IF I CAN DISTRACT THEM
BY THE GREAT LION!
A FIREBIRD! BLESS YOU, ARIANRHOD. YOUR ILLUSION IS PERFECT!
KEOS AND HIS MEN ARE TERRIFIED
AND BEFORE THEY CAN RECOVER THEIR EQUILIBRIUM, I'LL GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO BE TRULY TERRIFIED OF.
INKOSE!
GRAURRRGHHH...
TREACHEROUS SLUT!
YOU'RE A FOOL, CASTA. YOU'VE SEEN ME FIGHT. YOU SHOULD HAVE TURNED AND RUN WHILE YOU HAD THE CHANCE, LIKE THE CRAVEN CUR YOU ARE
INSTEAD, YOU'LL BE KEEPING INKOSE COMPANY ON THE ROCKY ROAD TO TARTARUS
ENJOY YOUR ETERNAL DAMNATION YOU'VE NO DOUBT EARNED IT.

LIKE CASTA, I TOO HAVE SEEN YOU FIGHT. UNLIKE HIM, I AM NO FOOL
WHY THEN, KEOS, ARE YOU STILL HERE?
YOU'VE SLAIN TWO GOOD MEN SHE-WOLF. I'LL NOT LEAVE 'TIL I'VE AVENGED THEM. FOR ALL YOUR VAUNTED SKILL, I'M TALLER, STRONGER, ALMOST AS FAST
AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, FRESH!
HE'S PINNED MY SWORD!
I ALSO DON'T FIGHT FAIR!
AND MARADA DOESN'T FIGHT ALONE!
THE WOLFLING!
LET GO MY ARM CURSE YOU!
GODS!

THEY DENY YOU, KEOS AS DO I
MERCY, GREAT ONE - AHHRRR!!
I GRANT YOU THE MERCY OF A QUICK DEATH, MACRO. IT IS MORE THAN YOU DESERVE
MAJESTY!
MY SACRED SPEARS!
MARADA--WARRIORS!
AMUN BE PRAISED, MAJESTY--YOU ARE WELL WHEN WE DISCOVERED FRESH HORSE TRACKS PARALLELLING YOUR ROUTE, WE FEARED THE WORST.
PUT UP YOUR SPEARS I AM UNHURT--THANKS, IN LARGE MEASURE, TO THE COURAGE OF MARADA AND HER CHILD.
THEY ARE STRANGERS NO MORE
BUT HONORED FRIENDS
I OFFER MY HAND STARHAIR AND I WILL NOT BE OFFENDED IF YOU REFUSE IT
IN HONOR, ASHAKE, I ACCEPT
A WEEK LATER, AT THE PASS, AFTER MARADA AND ARI--AND ASHAKE HAVE FULLY RECOVERED FROM THEIR ORDEAL
STAY, MARADA. BE MY RIGHT HAND, MY TRUSTED FRIEND
THE LAST GLADLY THE REST NO
I AM PLEDGED TO RETURN ARIANRHOD SAFELY HOME
FAR WE HAVE COME, FARTHER STILL WE MUST GO AFTER THAT ASHAKE, WHO CAN SAY?
THE SHE WOLF AND THE LIONESS MAY YET MEET AGAIN


PROLOGUE:
SOMETIME IN THE NEAR FUTURE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE ASTEROID BELT AND THE GREAT SMARM NEBULA...
GODDAMIT GLORIA! HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO HANG YOUR PANTY HOSE IN THE SOLAR COLLECTOR TO DRY?! I ALMOST STRANGLED MYSELF WHEN I WENT OUT TO REPLACE THE BATTERIES!
TOO BAD! AT LEAST IF YOU HAD, I WOULDN'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO YOUR CHRONIC COMPLAINTS, YOU BIG TURKEY!
LISTEN?! "YOU?!... LISTEN?! DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH! I'VE GOT TO CALL BASE AND I DON'T WANT THEM TO THINK WE'RE HAVIN A GOOD TIME OUT HERE!
SOON
BOY, SOME HONEYMOON THIS TURNED OUT TO BE. WHOEVER THOUGHT OF SENDING HUSBAND-AND-WIFE TEAMS ON THESE DEEP SPACE MISSIONS ANYWAY?
WELL, I'LL TELL YOU, FRED IT ALL STARTED WITH THE FIRST MANNED EXPLORATION OF URANUS! IT TOOK FOURTEEN MONTHS... EACH WAY! DO YOU REMEMBER THE TWO GUYS THAT WENT OUT ON IT?
SURE. WILLIAM FITZ-PATRICK AND PATRICK FITZ-WILLIAM! WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THEM ANYWAY? HOW THE HELL DID THEY GET ALONG?
UH, A LITTLE TOO WELL AS IT TURNED OUT
HUH? WHADDA YA MEAN?
ABOUT SIX MONTHS OUT WE STARTED HAVING TO BLEEP OUT THEIR TRANS-MISSIONS! THEY GOT TO CALLING EACH OTHER SUGAR BUNS AND PUPPY EARS AND STUFF NOT TO MENTION ALL THE SLURPING NOISES...
COSMOPOLITAN
WHEN THEY FINALLY STEPPED OUT OF THE RE-ENTRY MODULE HOLDING HANDS, WE REALIZED THAT SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE! WE'VE GOT TO THINK OF OUR IMAGE IN THE WORLD MEDIA!
YEAH? WELL WHAT'S I GONNA DO FOR YOUR IMAGE IF I TAKE A SOCKET WRENCH TO GLORIA'S FACE?! I'M TELLIN' YA... NAG, NAG, NAG... IT'S ENUFF TO... HUH?
DISCONNECTED! @★$%@. MEGA-CONGLOMS GOT US ALL BY THE SHORT HAIRS AND IS OUT MINING DUODENUM FOR THEIR STINKIN COMPUTER CHIPS...
BZEEK! PLEASE DEPOSIT 6000 CREDITS OR YOUR CONVERSATION WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY
HEY, LOOK OUT!

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TAKE TWO **LUMPS OF FLESH**... THEN ADD A **DASH** OF **COMPETITIVENESS**, A **SOUPÇON** OF **IGNORANCE**, TWO TABLESPOONS OF **INEPTITUDE**, AND **THROW IN** A COUPLE OF **FOIBLES**. THEN **BAKE TOGETHER** UNDER **INTENSE PRESSURE** FOR **TOO LONG** AND WHAT HAVE YOU **GOT?**. A PRESCRIPTION FOR.

CABIN FEVER!

NEVER MIND THAT! JUST WATCH WHERE YOU'RE **DRIVING!** YOU ALMOST **RAMMED** THAT **PLEASURE CRUISER!**

HAVE YOU BEEN DRINKING THAT **SERVO-MOTOR FLUID** AGAIN YOU BUM?

BAD YEAR

BLEEEP!

@#$%!! **ROAD HOGS!**

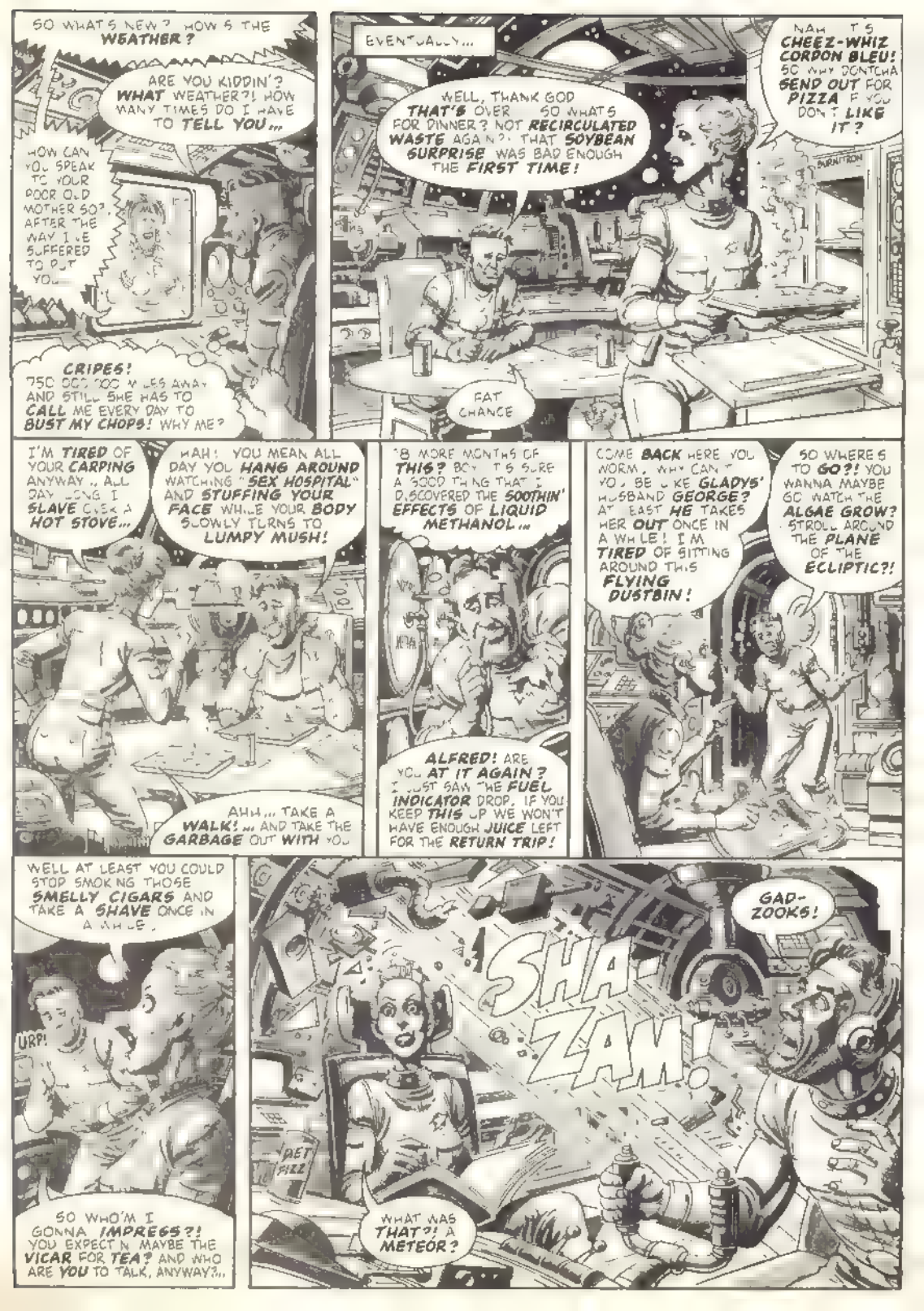
THERE GOES THE **VID** AGAIN! I'M GONNA GIVE THOSE SUCKERS BACK AT MISSION CONTROL A **PIECE** OF MY **MIND!** THESE STINKIN **UNIFORMS** ARE ALWAYS **BINDING UP** IN THE **CROTCH!**

HELLO! NOW **LISSEN,** YOU **CHEAP BASTARDS...**

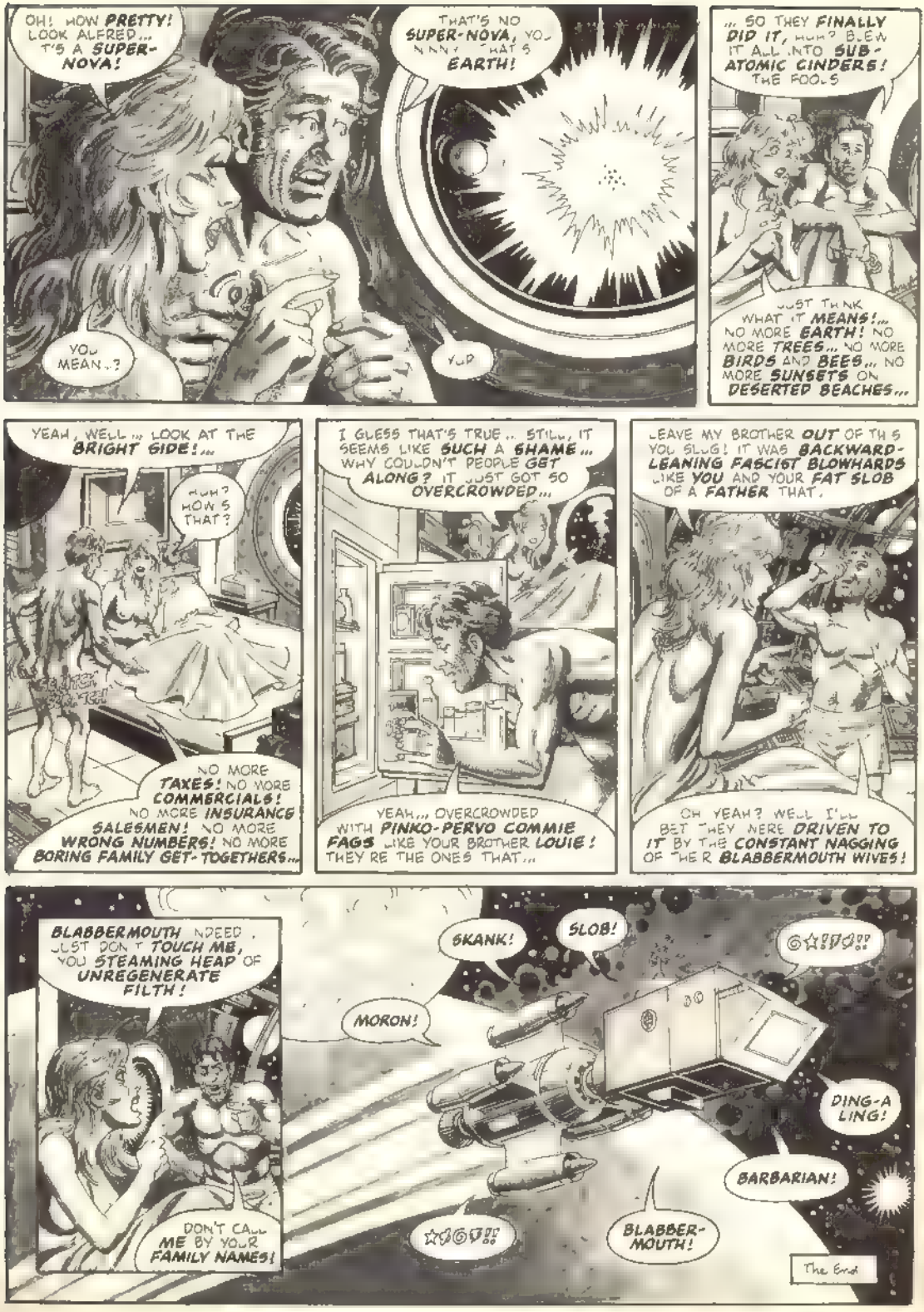
WOOPS! UH **SORRY, MOM!** I DON'T **KNOW** IT WAS **YOU!** IT'S JUST THAT I WISH THEY DON'T GIVE ALL THEIR **CONTRACTS** TO THE **LOWEST BIDDER!** I MEAN FOR **50 CENTS EXTRA,** THEY COULD HAVE PUT IN A **ZIPPER...**

YOU THINK YOU'RE THE **ONLY ONE** THAT'S GOT **TROUBLES?** GALLIVANTING AROUND THE GALAXY WHILE YOUR POOR MOTHER SITS HERE NURSING HER **LUMBAGO...**

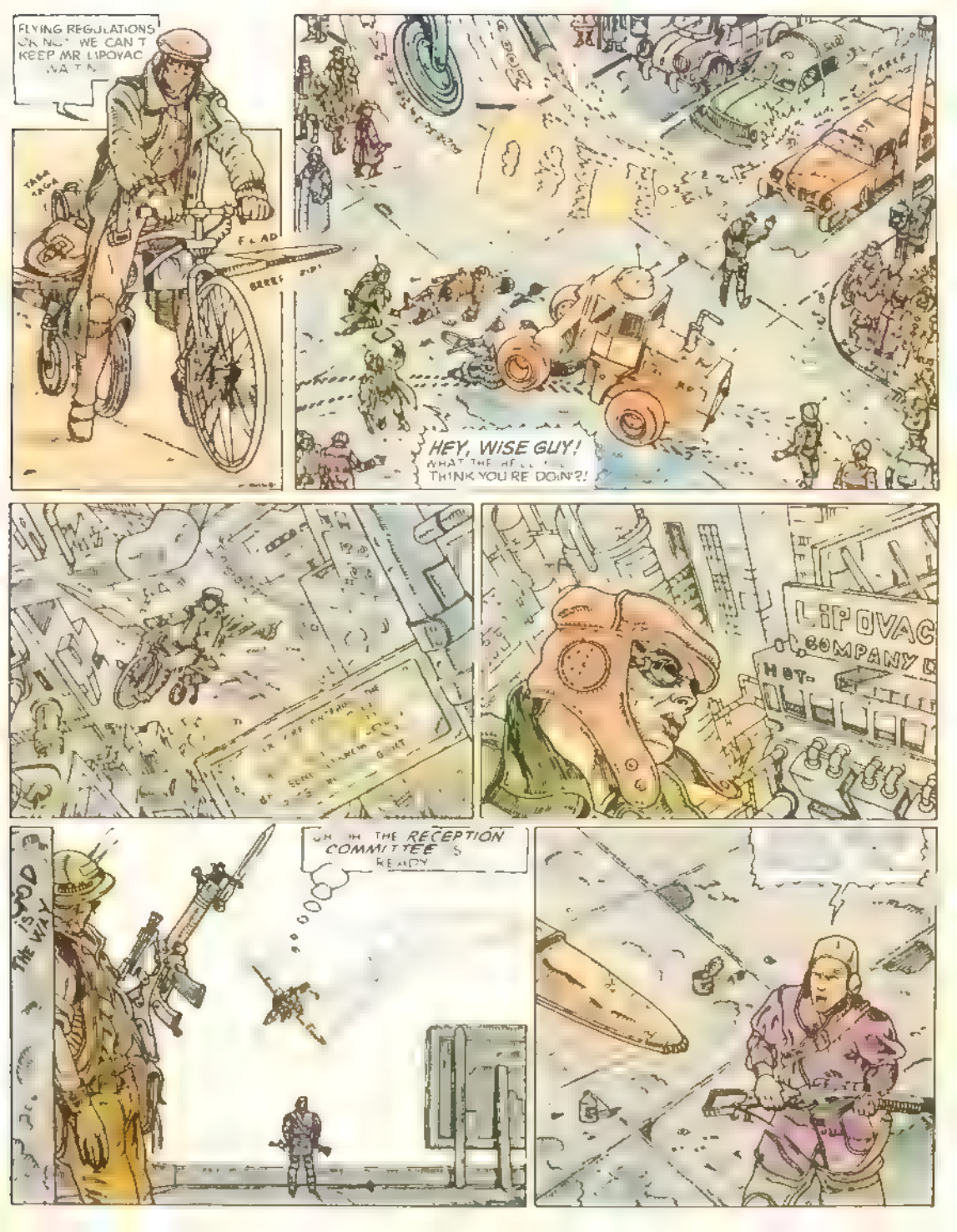
YEAH WELL.. I'M **SORRY,** OKAY?..

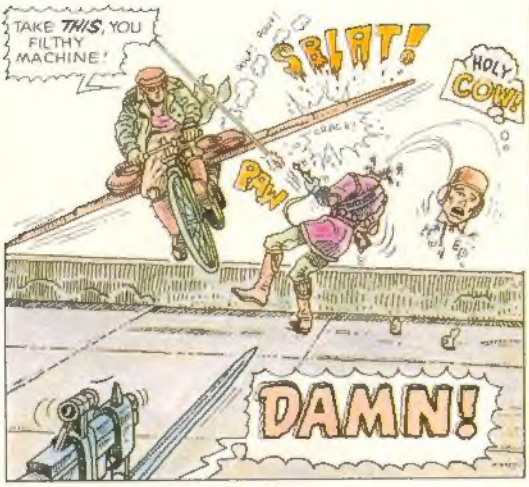

SO WHAT'S NEW? HOW'S THE WEATHER?
ARE YOU KIDDIN'? WHAT WEATHER?! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU...
HOW CAN YOU SPEAK TO YOUR POOR OLD MOTHER SO? AFTER THE WAY I'VE SUFFERED TO PUT YOU...
CRIPES! 750,000,000 MILES AWAY AND STILL SHE HAS TO CALL ME EVERY DAY TO BUST MY CHOPS! WHY ME?
EVENTUALLY...
WELL, THANK GOD THAT'S OVER. SO WHAT'S FOR DINNER? NOT RECIRCULATED WASTE AGAIN?! THAT SOYBEAN SURPRISE WAS BAD ENOUGH THE FIRST TIME!
NUTRITRON
NAH! IT'S CHEEZ-WHIZ CORDON BLEU! SO WHY DON'TCHA SEND OUT FOR PIZZA IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT?
FAT CHANCE
I'M TIRED OF YOUR CARPING ANYWAY... ALL DAY LONG I SLAVE OVER A HOT STOVE...
HAH! YOU MEAN ALL DAY YOU HANG AROUND WATCHING "SEX HOSPITAL" AND STUFFING YOUR FACE WHILE YOUR BODY SLOWLY TURNS TO LUMPY MUSH!
AHH... TAKE A WALK!... AND TAKE THE GARBAGE OUT WITH YOU
8 MORE MONTHS OF THIS? BOY, IT'S SURE A GOOD THING THAT I DISCOVERED THE SOOTHIN' EFFECTS OF LIQUID METHANOL...
ALFRED! ARE YOU AT IT AGAIN? I JUST SAW THE FUEL INDICATOR DROP. IF YOU KEEP THIS UP WE WON'T HAVE ENOUGH JUICE LEFT FOR THE RETURN TRIP!
COME BACK HERE YOU WORM, WHY CAN'T YOU BE LIKE GLADYS' HUSBAND GEORGE? AT LEAST HE TAKES HER OUT ONCE IN A WHILE! I'M TIRED OF SITTING AROUND THIS FLYING DUSTBIN!
SO WHERE'S TO GO?! YOU WANNA MAYBE GO WATCH THE ALGAE GROW? STROLL AROUND THE PLANE OF THE ECLIPTIC?!
WELL AT LEAST YOU COULD STOP SMOKING THOSE SMELLY CIGARS AND TAKE A SHAVE ONCE IN A WHILE.
URP!
SO WHO'M I GONNA IMPREGS?! YOU EXPECT N MAYBE THE VICAR FOR TEA? AND WHO ARE YOU TO TALK, ANYWAY?...
SHA ZAM!
GAD-ZOOKS!
PET FIZZ
WHAT WAS THAT?! A METEOR?

NAH! JUST A BARREL OF TOXIC WASTE THEY DUMPED OUT HERE BACK IN THE EIGHTIES!
SAVE YOUR BREATH! IF YOU DON'T PATCH THAT HOLE IT MAY BE YOUR LAST!
WHOOSH!
HERE' HELP ME TACK THIS SEAT CUSHION OVER THE HOLE WITH THAT LEFTOVER ALGAE PASTE!...
WOW. THAT WAS SOME VACUUM!... IT SUCKED OUR UNIFORMS RIGHT OFF!
HEY! EVERYTHINGS ST.LL FLOATING AROUND! MUST HAVE KNOCKED OUT OUR GYROSCOPIC STABILIZERS...
WHOOPS! I'M BOUNCING FROM WALL TO WALL!
THAT'S NOTHING NEW. HERE! HANG ON TO THIS!
YOU D RTY P G ANY EXCUSE TO OOH!
SO UH, HOWZABOUT A L TT E FREE-FALL NOOKIE?!
WELL, YOU DID JUST SAVE OUR LIVES! OKAY, AS LONG AS I'M ON TOP! I OUTRANK YOU, REMEMBER?
YOU WOULD THROW THAT IN MY FACE ... DAMN.
WHAT'S THE MATTER YOU COSMIC KLUTZ?... CAN'T GET IT UP?!
I'M NOT REALLY TOO SURE WHICH WAY IS UP.
AHH.. NEVER MIND, LOVER-BOY, I GOTTA HEADACHE ANYWAY.
YEAH? SO TAKE A COUPLE OF THESE HERE NUMBITALS... AT LEAST THEY KEEP YOU QUIET
SOON..
AHH FOR THE GOOD OLD DAYS ON EARTH WHEN MEN WERE MEN AND WOMEN WERE LIVE-STOCK! WHEN EVERY DAY WAS A...
THRILLING TALES
HUH?!
HEY. WHO TURNED ON THE LIGHTS?
FLASH!
THRILLING TALES

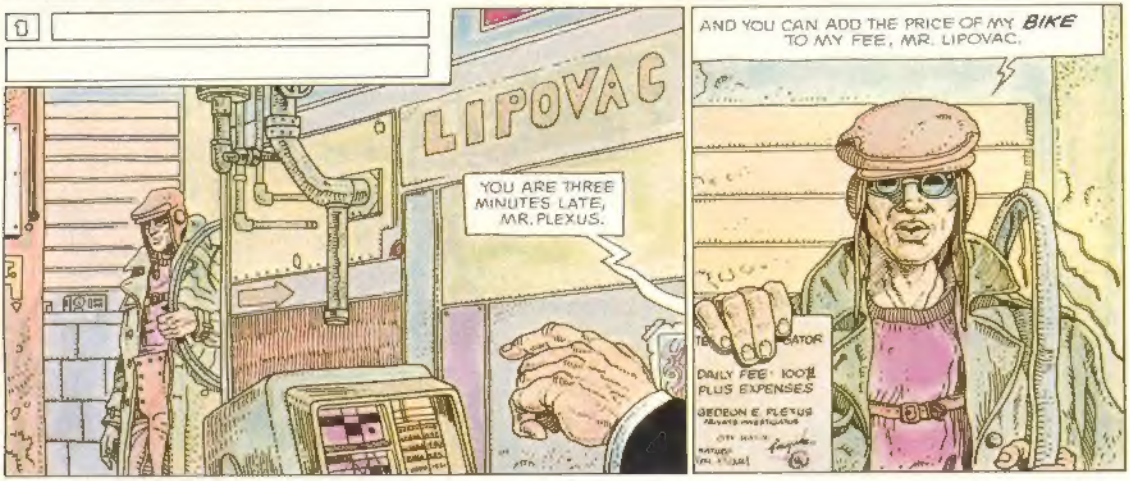

OH! HOW PRETTY! LOOK ALFRED... IT'S A SUPER-NOVA!
THAT'S NO SUPER-NOVA, YOU NINNY! THAT'S EARTH!
YOU MEAN..?
YUP
... SO THEY FINALLY DID IT, HUH? BLEW IT ALL INTO SUB-ATOMIC CINDERS! THE FOOLS
JUST THINK WHAT IT MEANS!... NO MORE EARTH! NO MORE TREES... NO MORE BIRDS AND BEES... NO MORE SUNSETS ON DESERTED BEACHES...
YEAH, WELL... LOOK AT THE BRIGHT SIDE!...
HUH? HOW'S THAT?
NO MORE TAXES! NO MORE COMMERCIALS! NO MORE INSURANCE SALESMEN! NO MORE WRONG NUMBERS! NO MORE BORING FAMILY GET-TOGETHERS...
I GUESS THAT'S TRUE.. STILL, IT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A SHAME... WHY COULDN'T PEOPLE GET ALONG? IT JUST GOT SO OVERCROWDED...
YEAH... OVERCROWDED WITH PINKO-PERVO COMMIE FAGS LIKE YOUR BROTHER LOUIE! THEY'RE THE ONES THAT...
LEAVE MY BROTHER OUT OF THIS YOU SLUG! IT WAS BACKWARD-LEANING FASCIST BLOWHARDS LIKE YOU AND YOUR FAT SLOB OF A FATHER THAT.
OH YEAH? WELL I'LL BET THEY WERE DRIVEN TO IT BY THE CONSTANT NAGGING OF THEIR BLABBERMOUTH WIVES!
BLABBERMOUTH INDEED. JUST DON'T TOUCH ME, YOU STEAMING HEAP OF UNREGENERATE FILTH!
DON'T CALL ME BY YOUR FAMILY NAMES!
SKANK!
SLOB!
@☆!!@!!
MORON!
DING-A LING!
BARBARIAN!
☆!@@!!
BLABBER-MOUTH!
The End

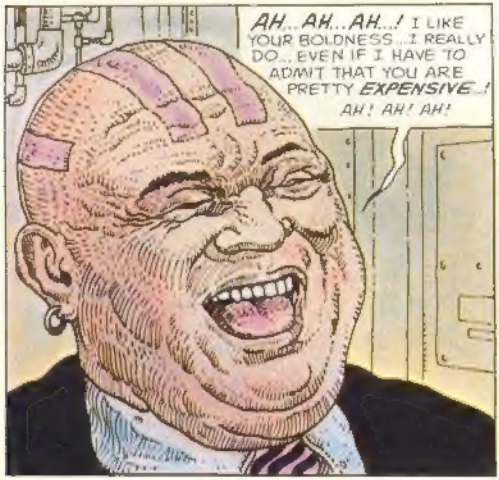
A GEDEON PLEXUS ADVENTURE
TO KILL A DRAGON
WHAT'S UP CHIEF?
PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR GEDEON PLEXUS
SPREAD YOUR WINGS, G.P.! SOMEBODY VE-EERY BIG WANTS TO SEE YOU DON'T DROP, HONEY WHEN YOU HEAR TH S ADDRESS
MMMMM AAAAH
ISK
GEE! FOURTH LEVEL! WE'VE HIT THE BULLSEYE THIS TIME BABY! DID HE G VE YOU A PASSWORD FOR ME? YOU KNOW I CAN'T GET IN THAT SUPER DUPER PLACE W THOUT
AAAAH WHAT? OH NO HE JUST TOLD ME THAT YOUR COM NG IN WITHOUT IT WOULD BE THE BEST DEMONSTRATION OF YOUR OMPE TENCE RAAAAH
KAY CHEF I'M G N SY THE WAY THAT FEATHER OF YOURS W L DRVE YOU CRAZY SOONER OR LATER HAHAHA
YOU SON OF A BI..
click!


FLYING REGULATIONS
OH NO! WE CAN'T
KEEP MR LIPOVAC
WAITING
TAKE
FLAD
HEY, WISE GUY!
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU
THINK YOU'RE DOIN'?!
LIPOVAC
COMPANY
HOT-
GOD IS ON THE WAY
OH NO THE RECEPTION
COMMITTEE'S
READY

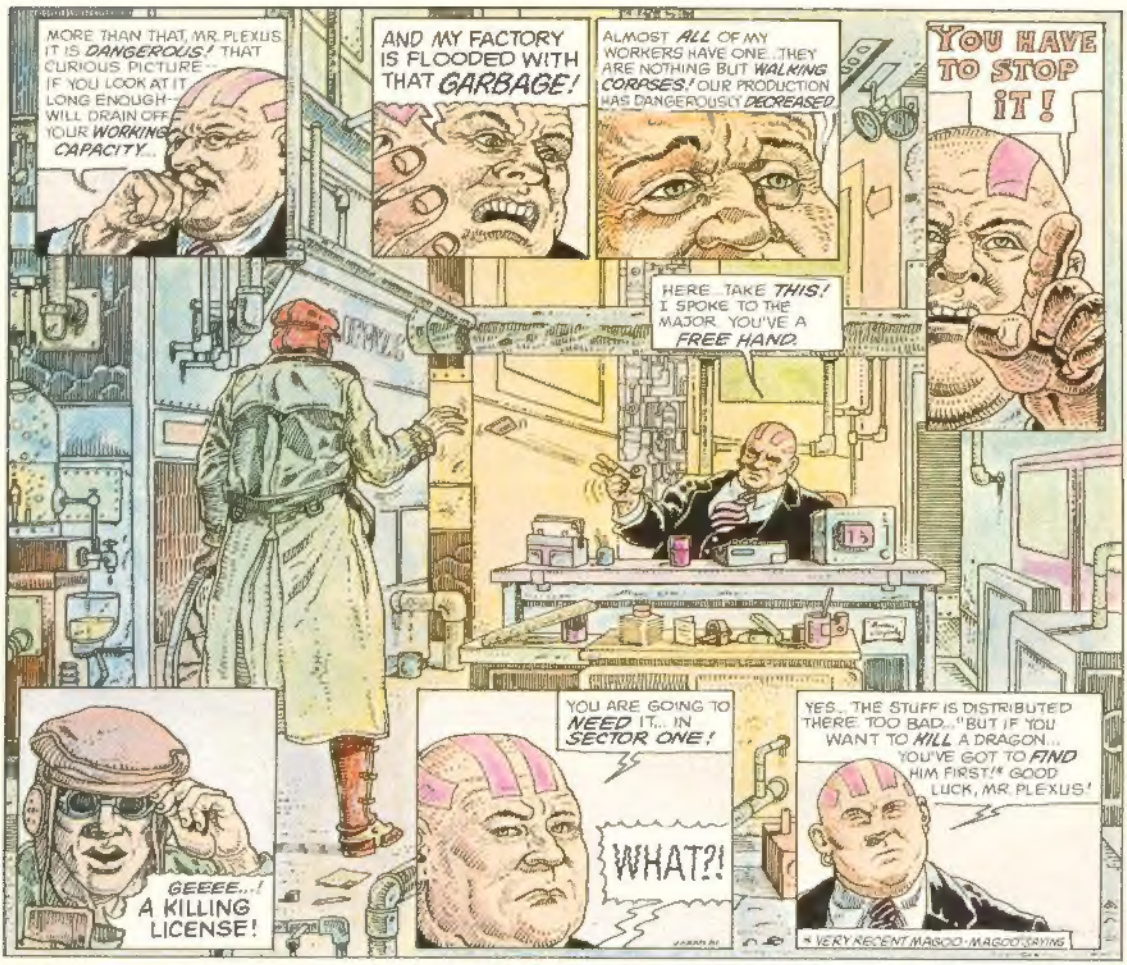

TAKE THIS, YOU FILTHY MACHINE!
SPLAT!
HOLY COW!
PAW
DAMN!

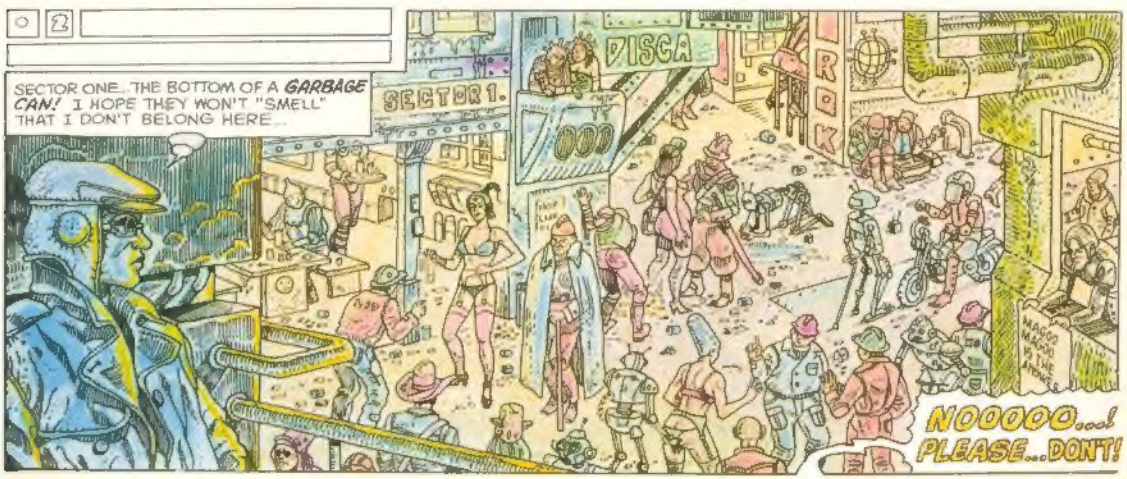
KA-TA-BOOM!
KRRK...KRRK...KRRK... SHIT, MAN... SHIT... I NEVER...RRRP... KNEW I WAS...KRRK... AN ANDROID..!
KRRK! OH, BARF! KRRRRP


1
LIPOVAC
YOU ARE THREE MINUTES LATE, MR. PLEXUS.
AND YOU CAN ADD THE PRICE OF MY BIKE TO MY FEE, MR. LIPOVAC.
DAILY FEE: 100!! PLUS EXPENSES
GEDEON E. PLEXUS

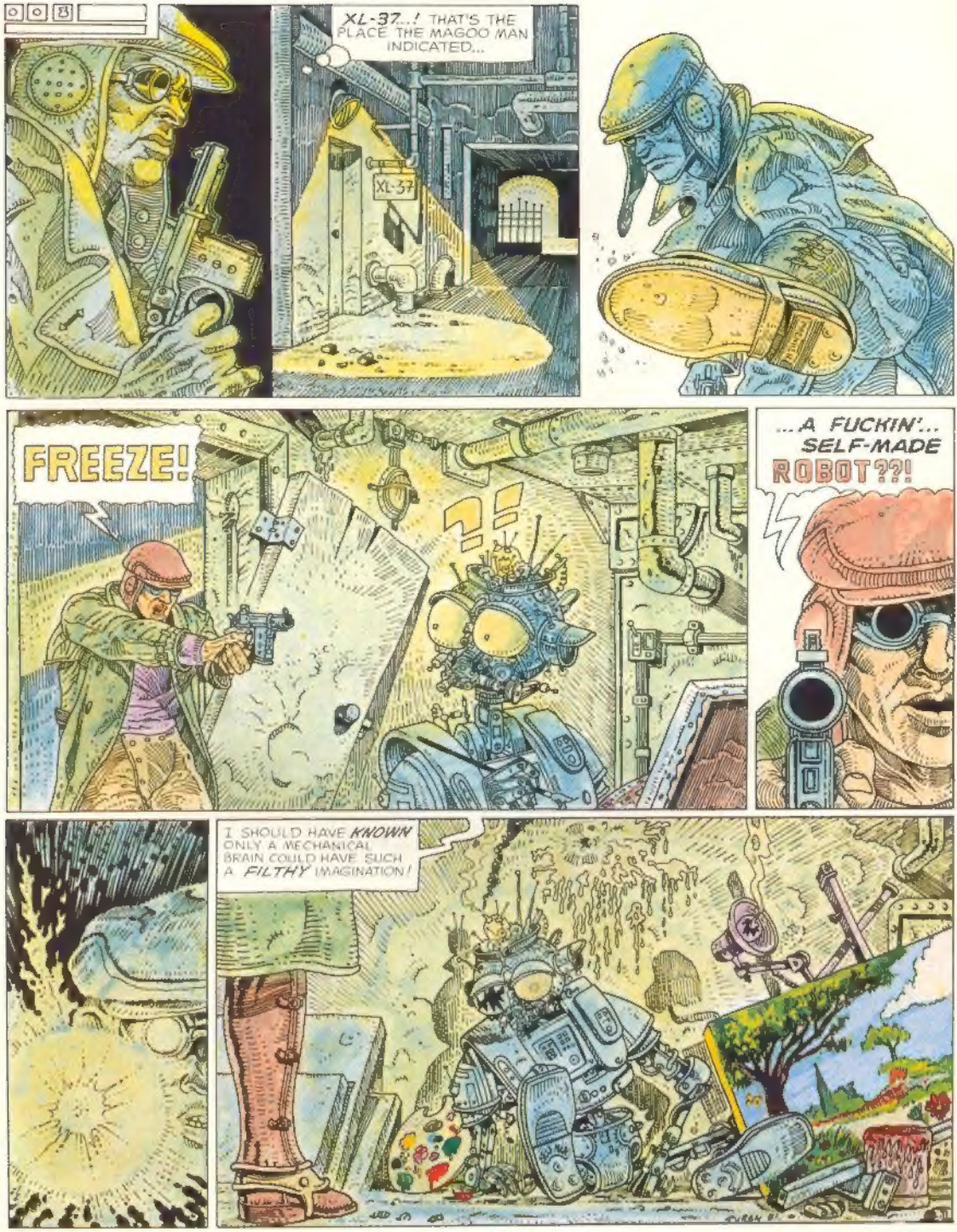

AH...AH...AH...! I LIKE YOUR BOLDNESS...I REALLY DO...EVEN IF I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT YOU ARE PRETTY EXPENSIVE...! AH! AH! AH!

SO... LET'S NOT WASTE OUR TIME. TELL ME WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS?
DISGUSTING!


MORE THAN THAT, MR. PLEXUS, IT IS DANGEROUS! THAT CURIOUS PICTURE... IF YOU LOOK AT IT LONG ENOUGH- WILL DRAIN OFF YOUR WORKING CAPACITY...
AND MY FACTORY IS FLOODED WITH THAT GARBAGE!
ALMOST ALL OF MY WORKERS HAVE ONE...THEY ARE NOTHING BUT WALKING CORPSES! OUR PRODUCTION HAS DANGEROUSLY DECREASED
YOU HAVE TO STOP IT!
HERE...TAKE THIS! I SPOKE TO THE MAJOR. YOU'VE A FREE HAND.
GEEEE...! A KILLING LICENSE!
YOU ARE GOING TO NEED IT... IN SECTOR ONE!
WHAT?!
YES... THE STUFF IS DISTRIBUTED THERE TOO BAD..."BUT IF YOU WANT TO KILL A DRAGON... YOU'VE GOT TO FIND HIM FIRST!" GOOD LUCK, MR. PLEXUS!
* VERY RECENT MAGOO-MAGOOISM


SECTOR ONE...THE BOTTOM OF A GARBAGE CAN! I HOPE THEY WON'T "SMELL" THAT I DON'T BELONG HERE...
SECTOR 1.
DISCA
NOOOOO...! PLEASE...DON'T!

THE ANTI-MAGOO-MAGOO AMAZONS! THEY'VE GOTTEN SOMEBODY!
PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE
HEY, LOOK AT THIS! HE'S PEDDLING... DIRTY PICTURES!
MAGOO
THE PICTURES! IT'S MY MAN!
TAKO!
MAGOO
SE
ORAC
СЛОБОДА
KISS
P.O.W.
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?


XL-37...! THAT'S THE PLACE THE MAGOO MAN INDICATED...
XL-37
FREEZE!
...A FUCKIN'... SELF-MADE ROBOT??!
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN ONLY A MECHANICAL BRAIN COULD HAVE SUCH A FILTHY IMAGINATION!